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BALZAC, HONORE DE, 1799-18
THE PETTY BOURGEOIS /

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Balzac

The petty bourgeois

V.1

CENTRAL

Honoré de Balzac
LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

The Human Comedy

PARISIAN LIFE

VOLUME X

engraved 1895 by G. B. T. Son.



in L., R. 103, smpl.

M. COLLEVILLE AND FLAVIE

"So don't go making enemies ; you haven't any now, for you're a good fellow, and, thanks to that quality, which, in your case, amounts to fascination, we have got along pretty well so far!"—

"Enough ! enough !" said Collville, throwing his coat on a chair and untying his cravat ; "I am wrong and you're right, my dear Flavie."

"At the first opportunity, my dear old sheep," said the sly creature, patting her husband's check, "try to be civil to that young lawycr ; he's a shrcwd one, and we must have him on our side."

The *Edition Définitive* of the *Comédie
Humaine* by HONORÉ DE BALZAC,
now for the first time com-
pletely translated
into English. CS

THE PETTY BOURGEOIS. IN TWO VOLUMES.
TRANSLATED BY GEORGE BURNHAM
IVES, AND ILLUSTRATED WITH
EIGHT ETCHINGS. VOL. I.

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TO CONSTANCE-VICTOIRE

In the following pages, Madame, will be found one of those stories which come to an author's mind, he knows not whence, and take it captive before he has time to consider what sort of a welcome it will receive from the public, the all-powerful judge of the moment. Feeling almost sure of your indulgence for my infatuation, I dedicate this book to you: is it not fitting that it should belong to you as the tithe in the old days belonged to the Church, in memory of God, by whom everything is made to bloom and to ripen, in the fields and in the intellect?

A few bits of clay, left by Molière at the foot of his colossal statue of Tartuffe, are here worked over by a hand more audacious than clever; but, however far below the greatest of writers of comedy I am and must remain, I shall be content to have turned these crumbs picked up in the foreground of his play to some account, by exhibiting the modern hypocrite at work. The thing that most encouraged me in this difficult undertaking was that I found it to be entirely distinct from any religious question which must be put out of sight of one so devout as yourself, and because of that which a great writer has called INDIFFERENCE IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

May the double signification of your names be prophetic of the book's fortune! Deign to see in these few lines the expression of his most respectful gratitude who ventures to subscribe himself your most devoted servant,

DE BALZAC.

PART FIRST

(5)

PART FIRST

*

The Turnstile Saint-Jean, that typical detail of Old Paris, the description of which seemed so tedious in its day at the beginning of the study entitled *A Double Family*—(See SCENES OF PRIVATE LIFE)—has now no other existence than that typographical one. The construction of the Hôtel de Ville as it is to-day swept a whole quarter clean.

In 1830 passers-by might still see the turnstile painted upon the signboard of a dealer in wines, but that building, its last refuge, has since been torn down. Alas! old Paris is disappearing with frightful rapidity. Here and there we shall find in this work a typical dwelling of the Middle Ages, like that described at the beginning of *The Cat and Racket*, of which one or two specimens are still in existence; or the house occupied by Judge Popinot on Rue du Fouarre, a specimen of the abodes of the bourgeoisie in the old days. Here are the remains of Fulbert's mansion; there the whole basin of the Seine under Charles IX. Why should not the historian of French society, like another *Old Mortality*,

rescue these interesting relics of the past, as Sir Walter Scott's old man restored the tombs of the Covenanters? Certain it is that for ten years past the shrieks of literature have not been thrown away; art is beginning to disguise with its flowers the mean façades of what are known at Paris as *houses of produce*, wittily compared by one of our poets to commodes.

Let us here remark that the creation of the municipal commission *del ornamento* at Milan, which has supervision of the architecture of the street fronts of all buildings, and to whom all persons proposing to build are required to submit their plans, dates from the twelfth century. And who has not noticed, in that charming capital, the results of the patriotic regard of nobles and commoners for their city, as he has admired the character and originality of the buildings?—Hideous, unbridled speculation, which, from year to year, cuts down the height of floors, lays out a whole suite of rooms in the space once occupied by a dismantled salon, and wages war to the knife upon gardens, will inevitably exert an influence upon Parisian morals. People will soon be compelled to live without rather than within. Where is the sanctity of private life, the freedom of one's own fireside, to be found to-day? It begins with an income of fifty thousand francs. Still, a few millionaires do indulge in the luxury of a little mansion, separated from the street by a court-yard, and sheltered from public curiosity by the thick foliage of a garden.

By undertaking to equalize fortunes, that part of the Code which deals with the question of inheritances has produced those monsters in unhewn stone which accommodate thirty families and yield a hundred thousand francs a year. So it will be that, fifty years hence, we shall be able to count upon our fingers the houses like that which was occupied, at the time this narrative begins, by the Thuillier family; a really interesting house, which is entitled to the honor of a particular description, were it only to compare the bourgeoisie of a former time with the bourgeoisie of to-day.

Moreover, the situation and appearance of the house, the frame of the ensuing picture of manners, have a savor of the lesser bourgeoisie, which may attract or repel, according to the tastes and inclinations of each individual reader.

In the first place the Thuillier mansion belonged neither to Monsieur nor to Madame, but to Mademoiselle Thuillier, Monsieur Thuillier's elder sister.

This house, which had been purchased during the six months immediately following the Revolution of 1830 by Mademoiselle Marie-Jeanne-Brigitte Thuillier, a damsel of full age, was situated near the middle of Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, at the right as one turned into the street from Rue d'Enfer, so that the building occupied by Monsieur Thuillier faced the south.

The progressive movement of the people of Paris toward the high land on the right bank of the Seine, and the consequent desertion of the left bank, had

been for a long time exerting a baneful influence upon the sale of property in the Latin Quarter, so-called, when divers reasons, which will be explained in connection with the character and habits of Monsieur Thuillier, led his sister to decide upon the purchase of a piece of real estate; she secured the property in question at the upset price of forty-six thousand francs; the appurtenances amounted to six thousand more, making a total of fifty-two thousand francs. A description of the property, in the style of an advertisement, and the results obtained by Monsieur Thuillier's labors will make clear the means by which so many fortunes were made in July, 1830, while so many other fortunes were shipwrecked.

The façade of the house on the street was of rough stone coated with plaster, marred by lapse of time, and marked with the mason's trowel to imitate blocks of cut stone. This style of house-front is so common in Paris and so ugly that the city ought to offer gratuities to all land-owners who build of hewn stone and have their façades carved. This grisly structure, pierced by seven windows, was three stories in height, and ended in tile-covered attics. The heavy, solidly-built porte-cochère was of a form and style which indicated that the building on the street was erected during the Empire, with the object of utilizing part of the court-yard of an enormous, ancient mansion of the time when the Quartier d'Enfer was still in favor.

On one side was the porter's lodge, on the other

the staircase of the building with the stone front. Two other buildings, placed against the adjoining houses on each side, had formerly been used as carriage-houses, stables, kitchens and offices in connection with the house in the rear; but, since 1830, they had been converted into shops.

That on the right was let to a wholesale paper-dealer, one Monsieur Métivier nephew; that on the left to a bookseller named Barbet. The premises of each tenant extended above their shops, and the bookseller lived on the first, the paper-dealer on the second floor of the house, facing the street. Métivier nephew, who was rather a broker in paper than a dealer, and Barbet, who was much more of a bill-discounter than a bookseller, both had abundance of room in which to store; the former, the piles of paper purchased from needy manufacturers; the other, editions of works given in pledge for his loans.

The shark of the book-shop and this pike of the paper-mill lived on the best of terms, and their business operations, lacking the animation attendant upon retail trade, brought but few carriages into the court-yard, which was commonly so peaceful that the concierge was constantly compelled to pull up weeds from between the stones of the pavement. Messieurs Barbet and Métivier, who were hardly ready to be laid upon the shelf, paid a visit to their landlord now and then, and their promptness in paying their rent classed them among desirable tenants; they passed for very honest folk in the eyes of the Thuillier circle.

The third floor front was divided into two suites; one was occupied by Monsieur Dutocq, clerk to the justice of the peace, a retired government employé, and a frequenter of the salon Thuillier; the other by the hero of this Scene; for the moment we must be content to fix the amount of his rent, seven hundred francs, and the position he had taken up in the heart of the citadel three years before the moment when the curtain rises upon this domestic drama.

The clerk, a bachelor of fifty, occupied the larger of the two suites on the third floor; he had a cook and paid a thousand francs rent. Two years after her purchase Mademoiselle Thuillier was in receipt of seventy-two hundred francs a year from a house, of which the blinds were always closed under the former proprietor, because, although he had remodeled it within, and supplied it plentifully with mirrors, he was not able to sell or let it; and the Thuilliers, who lived in handsome quarters, as we shall see, enjoyed one of the finest gardens in the neighborhood, the trees of which overhung the quiet little Rue Neuve-Sainte-Catherine.

Located between court-yard and garden, the house they occupied seemed to have been built to gratify the whim of some newly-rich tradesman, under Louis XIV., that of a president of the Parliament, or the abode of some peaceful scholar. In its regular, even courses of handsome hewn stone there was a sort of Louis Fourteenthish—pardon the barbarism—grandeur; the red brick window trimmings recalled

the stables at Versailles, the arched windows were adorned with grotesque figures at the key of the arch and under the sill. The door, which was of glass in small panes in the upper part and solid below, and through which one caught a glimpse of the garden, was in the straightforward, modest style often employed in the porter's lodges of the royal châteaux.

There were two floors above the ground floor, with five windows in each, the whole covered by a square roof, ending in a weathercock, and pierced by four large chimneys and skylights. It may be that this edifice was the last fragment of some fine mansion; but an examination of the old plans of Paris reveals nothing to confirm that conjecture; and furthermore, Mademoiselle Thuillier's title-deeds prove the owner, in Louis the Fourteenth's time, to have been Petitot, the famous painter on enamel, who acquired the property from President Lecamus. It is probable that the president lived there while his famous hôtel on Rue de Thorigny was in process of construction.

Thus we see that art and the gown have alike passed that way. And with what liberal appreciation of one's needs and enjoyment was the interior of the house arranged! At the right, as you entered a square hall, forming a sort of closed vestibule, was a stone staircase with two windows looking on the garden; under the staircase was the door leading to the cellar. From the vestibule a door opened into the dining-room, which was lighted from the courtyard. The dining-room was connected on the other

side with a kitchen which was in the rear of Barbet's premises. Behind the staircase, on the garden side, was a magnificent long office with two windows. The first and second floors formed two complete suites, and the location of the servants' quarters under the roof was indicated by the skylights. A magnificent stove adorned this square vestibule, which was lighted by two glass doors facing each other. The floor was of black and white marble tiles, and the ceiling was supported by jutting beams formerly painted and gilded, but which, under the Empire no doubt, had received a coat of plain white paint throughout. Opposite the stove was a fountain in red marble with a marble basin. The three doors of the office, the salon and the dining-room, were made with oval panels, the paint upon which awaited a retouching which was more than necessary. The finish of the rooms was rather heavy, but the decorations were not without merit. The salon, which was finished entirely in wood, reminded one of the great century as well by its chimney-piece, in Languedoc marble, as by its ceiling ornamented at the corners, and the shape of the windows, which still retained the small old-fashioned panes. The dining-room, which communicated with the salon by folding-doors, had a stone floor; the wainscoting was of oak, unpainted, and an atrocious modern wall-paper replaced the tapestry of the old days. The ceiling was in paneled chestnut, which had been left untouched. The cabinet, modernized by Thuillier, added one more to the

Incongruities of the place. The gold and white mouldings of the salon had seen such hard service that one could see nothing but red lines where the gold used to be, and the white was streaked with yellow—and scaling off in spots. The phrase *Otium cum dignitate* could never have had a more eloquent illustration in the eyes of a poet than this once splendid dwelling afforded. The ironwork of the stair-rail was of a style befitting the abode of the magistrate and the artist; but to find their traces to-day in the remains of that majestic antiquity the eyes of an artist are requisite.

The Thuilliers and their predecessors many a time cast dishonor upon this gem among upper middle-class habitations by the introduction of the habits and devices of the petty bourgeoisie. Do you notice the black walnut chairs upholstered in horsehair; a mahogany table with an oilcloth cover; mahogany sideboards; a second-hand carpet under the table; white iron lamps, an ugly wall-paper with a red border, execrable engravings of the gloomiest subjects, and red-fringed calico curtains, in the dining-room where Petitot and his friends feasted? Do you realize the effect produced in the salon by the portraits of Monsieur and Madame and Mademoiselle Thuillier, by Pierre Grassou, the painter affected by well-to-do tradesmen; card-tables which had done service for twenty years, consoles of the time of the Empire, a tea-table of which the legs were in the shape of a bulky lyre, and furniture of prickly mahogany upholstered in

velvet with flowers painted on a chocolate background; upon the mantel-piece, beside the clock representing the Bellona of the Empire, candelabra with fluted columns; curtains of woolen damask and curtains of embroidered muslin, caught back by bands of stamped copper?—On the floor was a second-hand carpet. In the finely-proportioned oblong vestibule were velvet-covered benches; the decorated walls were concealed by cupboards of various periods brought thither from all the apartments hitherto occupied by the Thuilliers. The fountain was hidden from sight by boards, upon which was a smoky lamp that dated from 1815. Lastly, timidity, that unattractive goddess, had dictated the use, on the garden side as well as on the side of the court-yard, of double doors sheathed with iron, which were opened against the wall by day, and closed at night.

It is a simple matter to explain the deplorable profanation of this monument of private life in the seventeenth century by the private life of the nineteenth. In the early days of the Consulate, we will say, a master mason purchased this little mansion and conceived the idea of turning the land on the street to some use; so he probably demolished the fine porte-cochère, flanked by little pavilions which put the finishing-touch to this attractive place of sojourn—to make use of an old-fashioned expression—and the inventive genius of a Parisian land-holder left its brand upon the brow of this masterpiece of refined taste, as the newspaper and its

presses, the factory and its warehouses, commerce and its counting-houses are replacing the aristocracy, the old bourgeoisie, the financiers and the men of the gown in all those places where their magnificence was formerly displayed. What an interesting study is that of the title-deeds of property in Paris! On Rue des Batailles a hospital performs its charitable functions in the house of Chevalier Pierre Bayard du Terrail; the Third Estate laid out a street over the site of the Hôtel Necker. Old Paris is vanishing, following the kings, who have already vanished. For one masterpiece of architecture rescued from destruction by a Polish princess,* how many small palaces are falling, like Petitot's abode, into the hands of the Thuilliers!

The causes which led to Mademoiselle Thuillier's becoming the owner of this property were these:

At the fall of the Villèle ministry, Monsieur Louis-Jérôme Thuillier, who had then been twenty-six years in the employ of the treasury, became deputy-chief of a bureau; but he had barely assumed the subordinate authority conferred by a post which had formerly been beyond his wildest hopes, when the events of July, 1830, forced him to retire. He very shrewdly reckoned that his retiring pension would be promptly and honestly adjusted by people only too glad to have another place at their disposal, and he was right, for his pension was fixed at seventeen hundred francs.

When the prudent deputy-chief spoke of retiring

* The Hôtel Lambert on île Saint Louis, occupied by Princess Czartoriska.

from the government employ, his sister, who was much more truly his helpmeet than was his wife, was apprehensive for his future.

"What is going to become of Thuillier?" was a question addressed to each other with mutual dismay by Madame and Mademoiselle Thuillier, at that time occupying a small third floor apartment on Rue d'Argenteuil.

"He will be busy for some time getting his pension arranged," said Mademoiselle Thuillier; "but I'm thinking of an investment of my little savings that will give him something to do.—Yes, it'll be almost like being in the government to have some real estate to look after."

"Oh! dear sister, you will save his life!" cried Madame Thuillier.

"Yes, I have always kept in mind the possibility of such a crisis in Jérôme's life!" replied the old maid, patronizingly.

Mademoiselle Thuillier had too often heard her brother say: "Such and such a one is dead! he didn't survive his retirement two years!" she had too often heard Colleville, Thuillier's intimate friend and a government clerk like himself, joking about this grand climacteric of the bureaucrats, and saying: "We shall come to it in time!"—not to realize the danger incurred by her brother. The transition from activity to retirement is, in truth, the critical period in the clerk's life. Those clerks, who, upon being retired, have not the good fortune to substitute other occupations for those they have laid

aside, are apt to change in strange ways: some die; many fall into dissipation, a form of distraction the emptiness of which bears some resemblance to their work in the government offices; others, more inclined to mischief, dabble in stocks, throw away their savings and are overjoyed to be admitted to a share in an enterprise, destined to succeed, after the first crash and liquidation, in the more skilful hands which are on the watch; the ex-clerk thereupon rubs his own hands, now quite empty, saying to himself: "At all events, I foresaw what the future of that thing would be!"—But almost all of them struggle against their former ways of life.

"There are some," Colleville would say, "who are eaten up with the spleen peculiar to government clerks; they die from going round and round in the same circle; they have, not the *ver solitaire*—tape-worm—but the *carton solitaire*—solitary document case—Little Poiret couldn't see a white case with a blue edge without changing color at the well-loved sight; he always changed from green to yellow."

Mademoiselle Thuillier was looked upon as the good genius of her brother's household; she lacked neither force nor decision of character, as the story of her life will prove. This superiority to her surroundings made it possible for her to form a just estimate of her brother, although she worshiped him. Having looked on at the death of the hopes which depended upon her idol for their fulfilment, she had too much of the sentiment of maternity to deceive herself as to the deputy-chief's value in society.

Thuillier and his sister were children of the chief concierge at the Treasury Department. Thanks to his near-sightedness, Jérôme had escaped the innumerable drafts and conscriptions. The father's ambition was to have his son enter the employ of the government. In the early part of this century there were too many places filled in the army not to leave many vacant ones in the government offices, and the scarcity of clerks in the lower grades made it possible for honest Père Thuillier to place his son upon the first step of the bureaucratic hierarchy.

The concierge died in 1814, leaving Jérôme on the point of becoming deputy-chief, but bequeathing him no other fortune than that hope. The old gentleman and his wife, who died in 1810, had retired from their post about 1806, with no other means than their retiring pension, having devoted their spare cash to affording Jérôme such education as was obtainable at the time, and to supporting him and his sister.

The influence of the Restoration upon the bureaucracy is well known. The suppression of forty-one departments left without employment a multitude of worthy clerks requesting appointments to places inferior to those they had formerly held. To their well-earned rights were added the claims of the proscribed families whom the Revolution had ruined. Between these two currents Jérôme deemed himself very fortunate not to be discharged altogether on some frivolous pretext. He never ceased to tremble until the day when, having by good luck become deputy-chief, he was assured of

honorable retirement. This rapid summary will explain Monsieur Thuillier's inconsiderable ability and acquirements. He had learned Latin, mathematics, history and geography as one learns at boarding-school; but he got no higher than the second class, his father having chosen to avail himself of an opportunity to get his son into the department by boasting of his *superb handwriting*. Therefore, although young Thuillier wrote the first inscriptions in the register of the public debt, neither the language nor the philosophy of the scheme was his.

Having become an integral part of the ministerial machine, he cultivated letters but little, art still less; he became thoroughly acquainted with the routine work of his place, and as he sometimes had occasion, under the Empire, to enter the sphere occupied by employés of a higher grade, he acquired their superficial manners, which concealed the concierge's son, but he never so much as brushed up his wits there. His ignorance taught him to keep silent, and his silence was of service to him. Under the imperial régime he accustomed himself to the passive obedience which pleased his superiors; and to that quality he owed his promotion to be deputy-chief at a later period. His strict adherence to routine gave him the name of a man of great experience; his manners and his silence concealed his lack of information. His absolute nothingness was a title to consideration when they needed a man who was absolutely nothing. There was a fear of

giving offence to both parties in the Chamber, each of which had its favorite candidate, and the ministry extricated itself from the dilemma by carrying out the law concerning priority of service. That is how Thuillier became deputy-chief. Mademoiselle Thuillier, knowing that her brother abhorred reading, and was unlikely to find any employment to replace the bustle of the government offices, shrewdly determined, therefore, to throw upon him the responsibilities of a landed proprietor, to employ him in the cultivation of a garden, in the infinitely trivial details of middle-class life, and in neighborhood intrigues.

The adjustment of the details of the purchase and the transplanting of the Thuillier establishment from Rue d'Argenteuil to Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, together with the necessary labor of finding a suitable concierge and proper tenants, furnished Thuillier with occupation in 1831 and 1832. When the ceremony of transplanting was concluded, and Jérôme's sister saw that he did not take kindly to the operation, she found other ways of employing his time, which will be described in due course; but, as her reason for the selection was based upon Thuillier's character, it may not be inadvisable to say a word here upon that subject.

Although he was the son of a government concierge, Thuillier was what is called a handsome man; rather above middle height, slender, with not unpleasant features while he wore his glasses, but horrible to look at, as is frequently the case with myopes, as soon as he took them off; for the habit

of looking through goggles had spread a sort of film over his eyes.

From eighteen to thirty young Thuillier had some success with the fair sex, always in a sphere extending from the class of petty tradesmen to the chiefs of divisions in the government offices; but everybody knows that, under the Empire, the constant wars left Parisian society somewhat destitute by taking most of the live men away to the battle-field, and it may be, as a great physician has said, that that fact accounts for the supineness of the generation which occupies the stage in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Thuillier being compelled to resort to other than intellectual fascinations to draw attention to himself, learned to waltz and to perform in contradances so well that he was quoted as an authority; he was called *Beau Thuillier*. He played billiards to perfection; he was an artist in cutting figures out of paper; and his friend Colleville had tutored him so persistently with the tuning-fork that he could sing the fashionable airs of the day. From these trivial accomplishments resulted that appearance of social success which leads young men astray and gives them dazzling dreams of the future. Mademoiselle Thuillier, from 1806 to 1814, believed in her brother as implicitly as Mademoiselle d'Orleans in Louis-Philippe; she was proud of Jérôme, and in her mind's eye she saw him attaining the dignity of a director-generalship, thanks to this factitious vogue which, during those years, opened some

salons to him to which he assuredly would never have been admitted but for the circumstances which made society under the Empire a chaos.

But Beau Thuillier's triumphs were generally of short duration, for the women cared as little about keeping him as he cared about joining his fortunes with theirs forever; he would have been a most fitting subject of a comedy entitled *The Don Juan Against His Will*. The profession of *beau* was so wearisome to Thuillier that he aged visibly; his face, which was as covered with wrinkles as that of an old coquette, made him a good twelve years older than the certificate of his birth. Of his period of social success he retained the habit of looking in the mirror, of grasping his waist in order to make it smaller, and of assuming the attitudes of a dancer, all of which tended to prolong beyond his enjoyment of its benefits his lease of the nickname Beau Thuillier!

What was true in 1806 was an absurdity in 1826. He preserved some relics of the costume affected by the beaus of the Empire, which, to tell the truth, was not ill-suited to the dignity of a deputy-chief. He retained the white cravat with its numerous folds amid which the chin nestled, its two ends threatening passers-by on either side, and calling their attention to a jaunty knot, which used to be tied by fair hands. While following the fashions at a distance he adapted them to his own figure; he wore his hat far back upon his head, and low shoes and fine stockings in summer; his lengthened frock

coats reminded one of the *lévites* worn under the Empire; he had not yet abandoned ample shirt-frills and white waistcoats; he was always playing with the switch he carried in 1810, and he walked with a slight stoop. No one, to see Thuillier walking on the boulevards, would have taken him for the son of a man who provided lunches for the clerks in the Treasury Department, and wore the livery of Louis XVI.; he resembled a diplomatist of the Empire or a sub-prefect. Now, not only did Mademoiselle Thuillier flatter her brother's weakness by urging him to take especial pains with his personal appearance,—it being, in her case, a sort of continuation of her hero-worship,—but she also gave him all the pleasures of family life by transplanting beneath their roof a family whose previous existence had been, so to speak, collateral to theirs.

This was the family of Monsieur Colleville, Thuillier's bosom friend; but before depicting Pylades, it is indispensable to complete our picture of Orestes, especially as we have yet to explain how Thuillier, Beau Thuillier, came to be without a family, for the family does not exist except where children are; and here we must disclose one of those profound mysteries which lie buried in the arcana of family life, and of which some faint indications reach the surface when the agony of a false situation becomes too keen. We must now advert to the lives of Madame and Mademoiselle Thuillier; hitherto we have spoken only of the life, the quasi-public life, of Jérôme Thuillier.

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Marie-Jeanne-Brigitte Thuillier, who was four years older than her brother, was utterly sacrificed to him; it was a simpler matter to provide a profession for the one than a dowry for the other. Misfortune is to certain natures a beacon that lights them through the dark paths of the lower strata of social life. Superior to her brother, both in energy and intellect, Brigitte was one of those characters which, under the hammer of persecution, become concentrated, compact, capable of great resistance, not to say inflexible. Being jealous of her independence, she determined to cut loose from life at the porter's lodge and become the sole arbiter of her own destiny.

At the age of fourteen she took up her quarters in an attic a few steps from the Treasury, then located on Rue Vivienne, not far from Rue de la Vrillièr, where the Bank still is. She devoted herself with great courage to a little-known branch of industry, she was indebted to her father's patrons for the opportunity, which consisted in making bags for the Bank, for the Treasury, and also for the great banking-houses. In the third year she had two women working for her. By investing her savings in the public funds, she found herself, in 1814, mistress of an income of thirty-six hundred francs, earned in fifteen years. She spent but little and

dined at her father's almost every day while he lived, and, moreover, it is well known that consols fell to between forty and fifty francs during the Empire's dying convulsions; so that this result, which seems exaggerated, explains itself.

At the death of the former concierge, Brigitte and Jérôme, being then twenty-seven and twenty-three years old respectively, joined fortunes. The brother and sister were devotedly attached to each other. If Jérôme, then in the hey-day of his social success, happened to be short of cash, his sister in her stuff gown and with fingers raw from the thread she used in sewing always had a louis or two to give him. In Brigitte's eyes Jérôme was the handsomest and most fascinating man in the French Empire. To keep house for her darling brother, to be initiated into the secrets of Lindor and Don Juan, to be his slave, his poodle, was Brigitte's dream; she immolated herself almost as a wife or mistress might have done to an idol, whose selfishness was destined to be augmented and sacrificed by her. She sold her business to her forewoman for fifteen thousand francs, and took up her abode with the Thuilliers on Rue d'Argenteuil, assuming the rôle of mother, protectress and maid-servant of that *darling pet of the ladies*. With the prudence to be expected from a damsel who owed everything to her own discretion and hard work, Brigitte concealed the amount of her means from her brother; she feared, no doubt, the extravagant tendencies of a squire of dames, and she contributed but six hundred francs to the expenses

of the household; that, however, with Jérôme's eighteen hundred enabled them to make both ends meet.

From the very beginning of their partnership, Thuillier listened to his sister as to an oracle, consulted her concerning the most trivial matters of business, hid none of his secrets from her, and thus gave her a taste of the fruit of the thirst for domineering, which was the one pardonable flaw in her character. The sister, then, had sacrificed everything to her brother; she had made his interests the chief care of her heart, she lived in him. Her ascendancy over him was confirmed, strangely enough, by the marriage she arranged for him about 1814.

When she observed the rough measures of compression in the government offices adopted by the new-comers of the Restoration, and especially when she saw how the bourgeoisie were being crowded to the wall by the re-establishment of the old social régime, Brigitte understood, the better as her brother explained it to her, the social crisis wherein their mutual hopes were extinguished. Success was no longer possible for Beau Thuillier among the nobles who succeeded the parvenus of the Empire!

Thuillier had not sufficient strength of mind to adopt any political opinion, and he felt, as did his sister, the necessity of taking advantage of what remained of his youth to end his career as a lady's man. In that situation of affairs, a woman as jealous as Brigitte would and should seek to find a wife

for her brother, as much for herself as for him, for she alone could make him happy, and a Madame Thuillier was simply an accessory indispensable for the production of a child or two. If Brigitte had not the intellect suited to her strong will, she had at all events an instinctive consciousness of her power of domination; she had no education, but simply went straight ahead with the obstinacy of a nature accustomed to succeed. She had a genius for housekeeping, an economical mind, good judgment in providing for the table and an intense love of work. She foresaw therefore that she would never succeed in marrying Jérôme in a higher sphere than their own, in which families would be likely to make inquiries as to his home life and might be disturbed to find a mistress already installed; she looked about in the lower social stratum in search of people to be dazzled, and she found a suitable match close at hand.

The oldest of the clerks at the Bank, one Lemprun, had an only daughter named Céleste. Mademoiselle Céleste Lemprun would inherit the fortune of her mother, who was the only daughter of a well-to-do farmer. This fortune consisted of a few acres of land in the suburbs of Paris which the old gentleman still cultivated. Then there was the fortune of the worthy Lemprun himself, who had entered the employ of the Bank at the time of its foundation after long service in the banking-houses of Thélusson and Keller. Lemprun, who was at this time at the head of the employés of the Bank,

enjoyed the esteem and regard of the government and the censors.

So it happened that the council of the Bank, hearing some mention of Céleste's marriage with a faithful clerk at the Treasury Department, voted her a gratuity of six thousand francs. This gratuity, added to twelve thousand francs given by Père Lemprun, and twelve thousand given by Monsieur Galard, market gardener of Auteuil, carried the marriage-portion to thirty thousand francs. Old Galard and Monsieur and Madame Lemprun were delighted with the match; the chief clerk knew Mademoiselle Thuillier to be one of the most honest, worthy women in Paris. Moreover, Brigitte made her holding in the funds glisten in Lemprun's eyes by confiding to him that she should never marry, and neither the chief clerk nor his wife, both of whom were of the age of gold, would have presumed to pass judgment upon Brigitte. They were especially impressed by the splendor of Beau Thuillier's position, and the wedding took place, according to the timeworn phrase, to the satisfaction of all concerned.

The governor and secretary of the Bank acted as witnesses for the bride, as did Monsieur de la Billardièr, divisional chief, and Monsieur Rabourdin, chief of bureau, for Thuillier. Six days after the marriage, Lemprun was the victim of an audacious theft, which was mentioned in the papers of the day, but was speedily forgotten in the exciting events of 1815. The perpetrators of the crime

having eluded pursuit, Lemprun insisted upon making up the difference, and, although the Bank had charged the amount to profit and loss, the poor old man died of the grief caused by the misadventure. He considered it an attack upon his long life of stainless probity.

Madame Lemprun gave up all her husband's property to her daughter, Madame Thuillier, and went to live with her father at Auteuil, where that old gentleman died through an accident in 1817. Dismayed at the prospect of having to carry on her father's farm or to let it, Madame Lemprun besought Brigitte, whose capabilities and upright dealing aroused her admiration, to administer the estate of good man Galard and so arrange matters that her daughter should take over the whole, and should agree to pay her fifteen hundred francs a year and allow her to live in the house at Auteuil. The old farmer's fields, sold in small parcels, brought thirty thousand francs. Lemprun's inheritance yielded a like amount; and these two sums, added to the marriage-portion, swelled Céleste's fortune, in 1818, to ninety thousand francs.

The marriage-portion had been invested in shares in the Bank at a time when they were worth nine hundred francs. Brigitte so invested the sixty thousand as to yield five thousand a year, for the five per cents were at sixty, and one certificate for fifteen hundred francs was placed in the name of the widow Lemprun for her life. Thus, at the beginning of the year 1818, the six hundred francs

paid by Brigitte, Thuillier's salary of thirty-four hundred francs, Céleste's thirty-five hundred, and the dividends on thirty-four shares in the Bank gave the Thuillier household a yearly income of eleven thousand francs, which was administered by Brigitte on her own responsibility. It was essential to dispose of the financial question first of all, not only to obviate objections on that score, but to get it out of the way of the drama.

In the first place Brigitte gave five hundred francs a month to her brother, and steered the ship so that five thousand francs paid all the expenses of the household. She allowed her sister-in-law fifty francs a month, calling her attention to the fact that she herself spent no more than forty. In order to ensure her domination by the power of money, Brigitte hoarded the surplus of her own income; it was said in the government offices that she loaned money at usurious rates through the medium of her brother, who came to be looked upon as a bill-discounter. Although Brigitte did amass a capital of sixty thousand francs between 1813 and 1830, the existence of that sum can be explained by operations in the funds which fluctuated forty per cent in that period, and there is no occasion to resort to accusations, be they well or ill-founded, the truth of which would add nothing to the interest of this narrative.

In the very beginning Brigitte got poor Madame Thuillier under her feet by the first digs she gave her with the spur and by her cruel pulling upon the bit. Refinement of tyranny was not necessary, as

the victim speedily submitted to the inevitable. Céleste, who was quite devoid of wit and education, and accustomed to a sedentary life and an atmosphere of tranquillity, had an excessively mild disposition, and Brigitte had gauged her most accurately; she was pious in the most extended sense of the word; she would have undergone the harshest of penances to atone for the sin of having injured her neighbor, although unwittingly. She knew absolutely nothing of life, being accustomed to be waited on by her mother, who kept the house herself, and compelled to abstain from active movement because of a lymphatic tendency which made the slightest exertion wearisome to her; she was a true daughter of the common people of Paris, among whom the children, seldom beautiful, vary but little, being as they are the fruit of poverty, of excessive toil, and of houses without fresh air, freedom of action or any of the conveniences of life.

At the time of the marriage Céleste was a short, stout creature, with a fair complexion so faded as to be almost revolting, slow of motion, and with a countenance devoid of expression. Her forehead, far too extensive and prominent, resembled that of a person afflicted with hydrocephalus, and, beneath that wax-colored dome, her face, which was disproportionately small and ended in a point like a mouse's muzzle, caused some of her friends to fear that she would go mad sooner or later. Nor did her light blue eyes and her lips wreathed in an almost unchanging smile give the lie to that thought. On

the solemn day of her nuptials her expression, attitude and manner were those of a man condemned to death, who longs to have it over as soon as possible.

"She's rather a dose!"—said Colleville to Thuillier.

Brigitte was the knife to be thrust into this sluggish nature to which she offered a most striking contrast. In her face could be remarked the traces of a severe, regular style of beauty, marred by the hard, ungrateful toil that had been her unvarying lot since her infancy, and by the secret privations to which she had subjected herself in amassing her little store. Her skin, which was covered with blotches at an early age, had a steel-like tint. Her brown eyes were rimmed with black, or rather with black and blue; her upper lip was ornamented with a line of russet down which resembled a wreath of smoke; her lips were thin, and her commanding brow was surmounted by a mass of hair once black, but now turning gray. She stood as erect as the loveliest of blondes, and everything about her told of severe toil, of extinguished fires, and, as the sheriffs say, of *the cost of her exploits*.

In Brigitte's eyes Céleste was simply a fortune to be clutched, a mother to undergo the pains of childbirth, an additional subject in her empire. She soon reproached her for being so soft—*veule*—a word of her own, and the jealous old maid, who would have been in despair to have an energetic sister-in-law thrust upon her, felt a savage delight

in stimulating this weak creature's inactivity. Céleste, ashamed to see her sister-in-law displaying her enthusiasm in the performance of the duties of housemaid and in keeping the house, tried to assist her; she fell ill; Brigitte was instantly all devotion to her; she waited upon her as if she were the dearest of sisters, and said to her in Thuillier's presence: "You haven't the strength, little one, so you just do nothing at all!" She exhibited Céleste's incapacity by lavishing consolation upon her, by assuming that air of gentle compassion for the weak in which the strong find a way to sing their own praises.

As despotic natures which love to display their strength always overflow with compassion for physical suffering, she nursed her sister-in-law so devotedly as to satisfy Céleste's mother when she came to see her. When Madame Thuillier's health was restored, Brigitte spoke of her, in a loud enough tone for her to hear, as a "helpless creature, good for nothing," etc. Céleste went to her room to weep at her ease, and when Thuillier surprised her wiping away her tears, he excused his sister.

"She's a good creature," said he, "but she's very hasty; she loves you in her way; she treats me just like that."

Céleste, remembering the motherly care she had received from her sister-in-law, forgave her. Brigitte, however, treated her brother as the king of the establishment; she vaunted his qualities to Céleste, she made of him an autocrat, a Ladislas,

an infallible pope. Madame Thuillier, bereft of her father and grandfather, and almost deserted by her mother, who came to see her on Thursdays, and to whose house she went on Sundays in fine weather, had no one but her husband to love,—first, because he was her husband, and next, because, in her eyes, he was still Beau Thuillier. And then, too, he sometimes treated her as his wife, and all these reasons combined to make him the object of her adoration. He seemed the more perfect to her in that he often undertook to defend her and scolded his sister, not out of consideration for his wife, but from pure selfishness and to have peace in the house during the few moments that he remained there.

Beau Thuillier's practice was to dine at home, and to come home for the night at a very late hour; he attended balls in his own set, quite alone, just as if he were still a bachelor. Thus the two women were always *en tête-à-tête*. Céleste insensibly assumed a passive attitude and became what Brigitte wished her to be, a serf. The Queen Elizabeth of the establishment exchanged her domineering attitude for a sort of pity for the victim so constantly sacrificed. She ended by moderating her lofty airs, her cutting words, her tone of contempt, when she was certain that she had broken her sister to the yoke.

As soon as she could see the collar-galls on her victim's neck, she took care of her as of something of her own, and Céleste knew happier days. By dint of comparing the beginning with the sequel,

she began to feel something like affection for her tormentor. There was but one chance of the poor slave mustering up some energy in her own defence, of her becoming of some importance in the bosom of a family supported by her fortune, without her knowledge, and where she had only the crumbs that fell from the table,—but one chance,—and that chance did not occur.

In six years Céleste bore no child. Her sterility, which caused her to shed floods of tears month after month, kept Brigitte's contempt alive for a long while; she taunted her with being a good-for-nothing, not even able to bear children. The old maid, who had so often promised to love her brother's child as her own, was many years accustoming herself to the idea of this irremediable state of things.

At the time when this narrative begins, in 1840, Céleste, at forty-six, had ceased to weep, for she had been forced to accept the sad certainty that she could never become a mother. Strange to say, after twenty-five years of this life, in which she had finally blunted, yes, broken her knife, Brigitte loved Céleste as dearly as Céleste loved Brigitte. Time, comfort, the perpetual friction of domestic life, had no doubt made the angles less sharp, and worn the rough places smooth, and Céleste's lamb-like docility and resignation made the autumn skies serene. The two women were drawn together by the only real sentiment that ever actuated either of them, their adoration for the fortunate, egotistical Thuillier.

It came to pass that both of them, being childless, had, like all women who have longed in vain for children, lost their hearts to a child. This factitious mother-love, no less powerful, by the way, than the real article, calls for an explanation which will take us to the heart of this drama, and will account for Mademoiselle Thuillier's success in adding to her brother's occupations.

Thuillier had entered the employ of the government as a clerk without pay at the same time as Colleville, whom we have already spoken of as his intimate friend. Colleville's mode of life was in striking contrast to the uninteresting machine-like ménage of Thuillier, and if it is impossible not to remark that this chance contrast is not altogether moral, we must add that before making up one's mind it is well to go on to the end of the drama, which is unhappily only too true, and for which the dramatist is not responsible.

This Colleville was the only son of a talented musician, formerly first violin at the Opera under Francœur and Rebel. In his lifetime he used to tell the same anecdotes, at least six times a month, about the performances of the *Devin de Village*; he used to mimic Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and was wonderfully successful in so doing. Colleville and Thuillier were inseparable allies, and had no secrets from each other; their friendship, which began at the age of fifteen, had endured without a cloud till 1839.

Colleville was one of those clerks who are known

in the departments as cumulards.* Such clerks always owe their positions to their industrious habits. Colleville, himself no mean musician, was indebted to his father's name and influence for the position of first clarionet at the Opéra-Comique, and, so long as he remained single, being somewhat more opulent than Thuillier, often shared with his friend. But, in contrast to Thuillier, Colleville made a love match with Mademoiselle Flavie, the natural daughter of a famous danseuse at the Opera, her putative father being Du Bourguier, one of the richest contractors of the time, who, having ruined himself about 1800, forgot his daughter the more readily because he had some doubt as to the chastity of the famous ballet-dancer.

Both by birth and personal appearance Flavie seemed destined to a deplorable future, when Colleville, who frequently called upon the wealthy operatic star, fell in love with Flavie and married her. Prince Galathionne, who was the celebrated dancer's protector in 1815, when she was drawing near the close of her brilliant career, gave Flavie a dot of twenty thousand francs, and the mother added a most magnificent trousseau. The habitués of the house and the première's comrades at the Opera made handsome presents of jewelry and plate, so that the Colleville establishment was much richer in luxuries than in capital. Flavie, who had been reared in opulence, was installed in a charming suite, furnished by her mother's upholsterer, and

* A *cumulard* performs the duties usually assigned to several.

there the young woman was enthroned—a young woman with a decided liking for art and artists and for a certain amount of refinement.

Madame Colleville was at the same time pretty and piquant, clever, gracious, light of heart, and, to say it all in one word, a fine girl. The ballet-dancer having reached the age of forty-three, left the stage and went into the country, and thus deprived her daughter of the advantages afforded by her soon-dissipated wealth. Madame Colleville kept a pleasant house, but it was very expensive. Between 1816 and 1826 she had five children. From seven to nine in the morning Colleville kept books for a tradesman; at ten o'clock he was at his desk, and in the evening he was a musician. By blowing into a bit of wood at night and keeping accounts by double entry in the morning, he made from seven to eight thousand francs a year.

Madame Colleville aped the manners of ladies *comme il faut*; she received on Wednesdays, gave a concert every month and a dinner every fortnight. She saw Colleville only at dinner and at night when he came home, about midnight; even then it often happened that she had not returned. She went to the play, for which she often had complimentary boxes, and she would leave a line for Colleville to come for her at such and such a house, where she was to dance or take supper. The table at Madame Colleville's was most excellent, and the society there, although somewhat mixed, was extremely entertaining; she received famous

actresses, painters, literary men, and a few rich ones. Madame Colleville's style of living kept pace with that of Tullia, première danseuse at the Opera, with whom she was on intimate terms; but although the Collevilles encroached upon their capital and often had difficulty in paying their monthly bills, Flavie never ran in debt.

Colleville was very happy; he still loved his wife, and was still her best friend. Being always welcomed with an affectionate smile and with contagious demonstrations of delight, he yielded to her irresistible, charming ways. The ferocious activity displayed by him in his three occupations was well suited to his character and temperament. He was a stout, pleasant-faced fellow, high-colored, jovial, free with his money, and full of whims. In ten years there was not a single quarrel in his household. In the department he was looked upon as a hare-brained creature,—like all artists, they said,—but superficial observers mistook the constant hurry of the hard-working man for the going and coming of a busybody.

Colleville had wit enough to play the fool; he boasted of his domestic happiness, and took the trouble of hunting up anagrams, so that he might pose as a man absorbed by that passion. The clerks of his division in the department, the chiefs of bureau, even the divisional chiefs, came to his concerts; from time to time he opportunely slipped a theatre ticket into the proper hand, for his constant absences required extreme indulgence.

Rehearsals occupied about half of the time he should have passed at his desk, but the musical talent bequeathed him by his father was so genuine and profound that he had only to attend general rehearsals. Thanks to Madame Colleville's connections, the theatre and the ministry both bowed to the demands of the worthy pluralist's position; moreover, he was educating with great care a little fellow earnestly recommended by his wife, a great musician *in futuro*, who sometimes took his place with a promise of succeeding him.

In 1827, when Colleville resigned, this young man became first clarionet. The only criticism ever made upon Flavie was this: "Madame Colleville is a little slip of a flirt!" The oldest child, born in 1816, was the living image of honest Colleville. In 1818 Madame Colleville esteemed the cavalry above everything, even art, and at that time she distinguished with her favor a sub-lieutenant of the Saint-Chamans dragoons, the young and wealthy Charles Gondreville, who died sometime afterward in the Spanish campaign; she had already had her second son, who was destined thenceforth to a military career. In 1820 she looked upon the Bank as the nurse of industry, the mainstay of states, and the great Keller, the renowned orator, was her idol; she bore at that time a son, François, of whom she resolved to make in due season a merchant, and who would never fail to enjoy Keller's protection. Toward the end of 1820, Thuillier, the intimate friend of both Monsieur and Madame Colleville, and

an admirer of the latter, felt the need of pouring his sorrows into that excellent woman's bosom, and to her he detailed his conjugal wretchedness; he had been trying for six years to have children, but God did not smile upon his efforts, for poor Madame Thuillier went through with her nine days' devotion to no purpose; she had been to Notre-Dame de Liesse! He described Céleste from every point of view, and the words: "Poor Thuillier!" escaped Madame Colleville, who was herself somewhat low-spirited, as she was without any dominant passion just at that time. She poured her griefs into Thuillier's heart. The great Keller, the hero of the Left, was in reality full of little meannesses; she knew the reverse side of glory, the idiocies of the Bank, the prosiness of the tribune. The orator never spoke except in the Chamber, and he had behaved very badly to her. Thuillier waxed wroth.

"Only stupid men know how to love," said he; "take me!" Beau Thuillier was reputed to be paying court mildly to Madame Colleville, and he became one of her *attentifs*, a word dating from the Empire.

"Aha! you have an eye on my wife!" said Colleville, laughingly; "look out, she'll plant you as she has all the others."

A shrewd remark, whereby Colleville saved his dignity as a husband in the department.

In 1820 and 1821 Thuillier presumed upon his title as a friend of the family to assist Colleville, who had so often assisted him in the old days, and in the

TULLIA AND M. THUILLIER

"For heaven's sake, tell me," said Thuillier to Tullia, the dancer, who happened to be calling at Madame Colleville's, "why women don't get attached to me? I'm not an Apollo Belvedere, but I'm no Vulcan, either; I'm passably good-looking, I'm bright and faithful—"

"Do you want the truth?" said Tullia.

"Yes," said Beau Thuillier.

"Very good; although we can sometimes love a stupid man, we never love a fool."

That thrust was the end of Thuillier.

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course of eighteen months he loaned him nearly ten thousand francs, intending never to mention it. In the spring of 1821 Madame Colleville brought into the world a lovely girl, whose godfather and godmother were Monsieur and Madame Thuillier; and she was christened Céleste-Louise-Caroline-Brigitte, for Mademoiselle Thuillier insisted upon bestowing one of her names upon the little angel.

The name of Caroline was a graceful compliment to Colleville. Old mother Lemprun undertook to put the little creature out at nurse under her own eyes at Auteuil, where Céleste and her sister-in-law went to see her twice a week. As soon as Madame Colleville had recovered she said to Thuillier, frankly and in a serious tone:

"My dear friend, if we wish to continue good friends, be nothing more than our friend; Colleville is fond of you, and one's enough in a house."

"For heaven's sake, tell me," said Thuillier to Tullia, the dancer, who happened to be calling at Madame Colleville's, "why women don't get attached to me? I'm not an Apollo Belvedere, but I'm no Vulcan, either; I'm passably good-looking, I'm bright and faithful—"

"Do you want the truth?" said Tullia.

"Yes," said Beau Thuillier.

"Very good; although we can sometimes love a stupid man, we never love a fool."

That thrust was the end of Thuillier; he never recovered from it; he fell into melancholy and accused women of being capricious.

"Didn't I tell you so?"—said Colleville. "I'm not Napoléon, my dear fellow, and I'm mighty glad I'm not; but I have my Joséphine—a pearl!"

The Secretary-General of the Ministry, des Lupeaulx, to whom Madame Colleville attributed more influence than he really possessed, and of whom she afterward said: "He was one of my mistakes,"—was the next lion of the Colleville salon and reigned there for some time; but as he had not the power to procure Colleville's appointment to the division of Bois-Levant, Flavie had the good sense to be angry at his attentions to Madame Rabourdin, the wife of a chief of bureau,—a conceited hussy, she called her, who had never invited her to her house, and had twice insulted her by not coming to her concerts.

Madame Colleville was deeply affected by young Gondreville's death; she was inconsolable; she felt, she said, as if the hand of God were in it. In 1824 she reformed, talked about economy, abandoned her receptions, devoted herself to her children, and determined to be a good *mater familias*; her friends could not find that she had any favorite; but she went regularly to church, adopted a more subdued style of dress, wore sober grays, and talked of Catholicism and the proprieties; and this approach to mysticism produced, in 1825, a fine little boy, whom she called Théodore, that is to say, *a gift from God*.

In 1826, the prosperous days of the Congregation, Colleville was appointed deputy-chief in the Clergeot division, and in 1828 he became collector of an

arrondissement in Paris. He obtained the Cross of the Legion of Honor, so that he might some day send his daughter to Saint-Denis to be educated. The half-free scholarship obtained by Keller for Charles, the eldest of the Colleville children, in 1823, was given to the second; Charles went to Saint-Louis College with a full-free scholarship, and the third son, who was honored with the patronage of Madame la Dauphine, had a three-fourths-free scholarship at Henri Quatre College.

In 1830, Colleville, who had had the good fortune to lose none of his children, was compelled, by his attachment to the dethroned family, to offer his resignation; but he was shrewd enough to make a bargain, so to speak, whereby he obtained a pension of twenty-four hundred francs in consideration of his long time of service, and an indemnity of ten thousand francs offered by his successor; he was also appointed an officer in the Legion of Honor. Nevertheless he found himself in straitened circumstances, and in 1832 Mademoiselle Thuillier advised him to take up his abode near them, hinting at the possibility of his obtaining a place in the mayor's office, which he actually obtained a fortnight later, and which was worth a thousand crowns.

Charles Colleville had entered the naval school. The colleges at which the other two boys were being educated were both in the quarter. The seminary of Saint-Sulpice, which the latest comer was some day to attend, was not two steps from the Luxembourg. Thuillier and Colleville determined to end

their days together. In 1833 Madame Colleville, then thirty-five years old, took up her quarters on Rue d'Enfer at the corner of Rue des Deux-Églises, with Céleste and little Théodore. Colleville was at about the same distance from the mayor's office and from Rue Saint-Dominique. After an existence, alternately brilliant and shabby, full of excitement and calm and reposeful, the Colleville household was reduced to plain middle-class obscurity, and to fifty-four hundred francs a year in all.

Céleste was at this time twelve years old, and gave promise of being a beautiful girl; she must have masters and her education would cost at least two thousand francs a year. Her mother felt it to be necessary to keep her before the eyes of her godparents. She therefore adopted the suggestion of Madame Thuillier, which was desirable for other reasons as well; and that old maid gave Madame Colleville clearly to understand, but without binding herself to anything, that her brother's fortune, her sister-in-law's and her own were all destined for Céleste. The child had remained at Auteuil until she was seven, adored by dear old Madame Lemprun, who died in 1829, leaving a little hoard of twenty thousand francs and a house, which was sold for the enormous sum of twenty-eight thousand francs. The little witch had seen but little of her mother and a great deal of Madame and Mademoiselle Thuillier after 1829, the date of her return to the paternal roof. In 1833 she fell under the domination of Flavie, who thereupon exerted herself to

fulfil her duties, and actually outran them, as all women do who are spurred on by remorse. Without being a cruel mother, she kept her daughter within very strict limits; she remembered her own bringing up, and took an oath in her own mind to make Céleste an honest woman, not a wanton. She took her to mass therefore, and had her attend communion for the first time under the guidance of a Parisian curé, who subsequently became a bishop. Céleste's piety was the more genuine because her godmother, Madame Thuillier, was a saint, and the child worshiped her godmother; she had a feeling that the poor neglected wife loved her more dearly than her own mother did.

From 1833 to 1840 she received what was, according to bourgeois ideas, a magnificent education. The best of music-teachers made her a passable musician; she could paint prettily in water-colors; she danced like a fairy; she had learned the French language and history, geography, English, Italian, everything, in short, that a young lady *comme il faut* should know. Of medium height, rather stout, and afflicted with nearsightedness, she was neither plain nor pretty; she lacked neither a fair skin nor good coloring, but she was entirely uninstructed in the ways of society. She was very sensitive, though she seldom showed it, and both her godparents and her father and Mademoiselle Thuillier were unanimous on this point, the great resource of mothers, that Céleste was susceptible to the tender passion. One of her fine points was her magnificent silky

chestnut hair; but her hands and feet betrayed her bourgeois origin.

Céleste was possessed of those virtues which attract friendship; she was kind-hearted, simple in her ways, and entirely free from bitterness; she loved her father and mother and would have submitted to any sacrifice herself for them. As she had been brought up in profound admiration of her godfather, as well by Brigitte, who would have the child call her *Aunt Brigitte*, as by Madame Thuillier, and by her own mother, who became more and more intimate with the old beau of the Empire, Céleste had a most exalted idea of the ex-deputy-chief. The house on Rue Saint-Dominique had much the same effect upon her that the Tuileries has upon a courtier of the new dynasty.

Thuillier had not successfully resisted the beating-out process of the administrative mill, wherein one becomes thinner in proportion to the length of the process. Worn out by tedious labor, as well as by his exploits as a favorite of the fair sex, the ex-deputy-chief had lost all the faculties he ever possessed when he came to live on Rue Saint-Dominique; but his tired face, which wore a surly look, curiously mingled with a certain contented expression resembling the snug self-satisfaction of the upper clerk, made a deep impression upon Céleste. She alone could arouse animation in that pallid face. She knew that she was the joy of the Thuillier household.

The Collevilles and their children naturally

became the nucleus of the social circle which Mademoiselle Thuillier was ambitious to collect about her brother. A former clerk in the division La Billardière, who had lived more than thirty years in the Quartier Saint-Jacques, one Phellion, major of a legion, was promptly seized upon by the former collector and the former deputy-chief at their first consultation. Phellion was one of the most highly esteemed men in the arrondissement. He had a daughter, formerly sub-mistress at the Lagrave boarding-school, now married to Monsieur Barniol, a teacher, of Rue Saint-Hyacinthe.

Phellion's eldest son was professor of mathematics at a royal college; he gave lessons, took private pupils, and, as his father expressed it, devoted himself to pure mathematics. The second son was at the School of Bridges and Highways. Phellion had a pension of nine hundred francs and a total income of something over nine thousand, the fruit of his wife's savings and his own during thirty years of hard work and privation. He also owned a little house with a garden, where he made his home, in the Impasse des Feuillantines.—In thirty years the old word *cul-de-sac* has not once been used.—

Dutocq, the clerk to the justice of the peace, was formerly a clerk in the Treasury department; having fallen a victim to one of those necessities which sometimes occur in representative government, he had submitted to be made the scapegoat in an administration scandal, brought to light by the budget committee, and secretly rewarded by a round sum

in cash; he was thus enabled to purchase the office of justice's clerk. This man, who had little sense of honor, and was known as a spy in the department, was not received as cordially as he thought he should have been by the Thuilliers; but the coolness of his landlords made him persist in thrusting himself upon them.

He had never been married, and was not without his vices; he concealed his manner of living most sedulously, and was very clever in winning the good-will of his superiors by flattery. The magistrate was much attached to Dutocq. The shameless creature succeeded in inducing the Thuilliers to tolerate him by the mean, vulgar adulation which never fails of its effect. He knew Thuillier's life from beginning to end, his relations with the Collevilles, especially with Madame; they stood in awe of his redoubtable tongue, and the Thuilliers, without admitting him among their intimate friends, put up with him. The family which became the brightest flower in the Thuillier salon was that of a poor little clerk, once an object of charity in the departments, who, incited thereto by poverty, and with an idea, had left the employ of the government in 1827, in order to go into business.

Minard thought that he could see a fortune in one of those immoral schemes, which tend to bring French commerce into disrepute, but, in 1827, had not yet been emasculated by publicity. Minard purchased tea, and mixed with it in equal proportions tea that had already been once used; he also

manipulated and changed the component parts of chocolate in such a way as to enable him to sell it at a low price. This traffic in colonial produce, begun in the Quartier Saint-Marcel, constituted Minard a merchant; he had a warehouse, and by virtue of the business connections thus formed he was able to purchase at first hand; he conducted honestly, and on a large scale, the business which he had at first carried on in a questionable way. He became a distiller, handled enormous quantities of produce, and in 1835 was supposed to be the richest merchant in the Place Maubert district. He had purchased one of the finest houses on Rue des Maçons-Sorbonne; he had been deputy-mayor; and in 1839 he was appointed mayor of his arrondissement and a judge of the Tribunal de Commerce. He had a carriage and an estate near Lagny; his wife wore diamonds at the court balls, and he was swollen with pride by the rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honor in his buttonhole.

Minard and his wife were extremely benevolent, however. Perhaps they proposed to restore at retail to the poor what they had stolen by wholesale from the public. Phellion, Colleville and Thuillier fell in with Minard at the elections, and there resulted an intimacy with the Collevilles and Thuilliers which was made doubly close by the fact that Madame Zélie Minard seemed enchanted to have her *young lady* make the acquaintance of Céleste Colleville. It was at a large ball given by the Minards that Céleste, being then sixteen and a half years

old, made her first appearance in society, dressed in consonance with her name, which seemed to be prophetic of her life. Overjoyed as she was to become the friend of Mademoiselle Minard, her senior by four years, she compelled her father and godfather to cultivate the Minard family, with all its untold wealth and its gilded salons, frequented by some second-rate political celebrities: Monsieur Popinot, afterward Minister of Commerce; Cochu, since created Baron Cochu; and a former clerk of the Clergeot division at the Treasury department, who, being deeply interested in a large drug concern, was, jointly with Monsieur Anselme Popinot, the oracle of the Quartier des Lombards and des Bourdonnais. Minard's oldest son, an advocate, who aspired to step into the shoes of the advocates who had been dismissed from the Palais since 1830 for political reasons, was the genius of the family, and his mother and father were equally anxious to find a desirable wife for him. Zélie Minard, once a flower-maker, had a passionate longing for the higher social spheres, and was determined to force her way into them through the marriages of her son and daughter, while Minard, who was wiser than she, and was thoroughly imbued with the sturdy middle-class common-sense which the Revolution of July introduced into the veins of the ruling powers, thought of nothing but the question of fortune.

He haunted the Thuillier salon, seeking to glean information as to the probable amount of Céleste's inheritance. He had heard, as Dutocq and Phellion

had, the gossip caused by the intimacy of the Thuilliers with Flavie, and at the first glance he detected the idolatrous affection of the Thuilliers for their godchild. Dutocq, in order to worm his way into Minard's intimacy, flattered him in the most servile way. When Minard, the Rothschild of the neighborhood, appeared in the Thuillier salon, he compared him, not without adroitness, to Napoléon, he found him now so fat and ruddy and blooming, after knowing him long before at the bureau, thin and pale and sickly. "When you were in the division La Billardière, you were like Napoléon before the eighteenth Brumaire, and now I see before me the Napoléon of the Empire!" Nevertheless, Minard received his advances coldly and did not invite him; and in this way he made a mortal enemy of the malicious clerk.

*

Monsieur and Madame Phellion, honest, worthy folk though they were, could not forbear making their little calculations and conceiving hopes. They thought that Céleste would be an excellent match for their son the professor; and so, in order to have a party of their own in the Thuillier salon they brought thither their son-in-law, Monsieur Barniol, a man much considered in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, together with an old employé of the mayor's office, whose place Colleville had in a certain sense spirited away, for Monsieur Leudigeois,—such was his name,—a clerk of twenty years' standing, expected, as a reward of his long service, the secretaryship secured by Colleville. Thus the Phelliions formed a compact phalanx composed of seven persons, all faithful to its interests; the Colleville family was quite as numerous, and on certain Sundays there were thirty people in the Thuillier salon. Thuillier renewed the acquaintance of the Saillards, the Baudoyers, the Falleixes, all people of good standing in the Place-Royale Quartier, and they were often asked to dine.

Madame Colleville was the most distinguished person among the ladies of this circle, as Minard junior and Professor Phellion were the superior men; all the others, uneducated, devoid of ideas, and sprung from the lower orders, typified all the

absurd characteristics of the lesser bourgeoisie. Although every fortune won by hard work is supposed to imply some sort of talent, Minard was a mere bag of wind. Airing his rhetoric in complicated sentences, mistaking servility for politeness and set phrases for wit, he uttered commonplaces with a self-possession and flourish which were accepted as flights of eloquence. All those words which mean nothing and answer all purposes: progress, steam, coal, National Guard, democratic element, tendency to combine, public order, legality, movement and resistance, intimidation, seemed invented for Minard, whatever phase politics might assume; he simply paraphrased the ideas of his favorite newspaper. Julien Minard, the young advocate, suffered as much from his father as his father suffered from his wife. With their increase of fortune Zélie had put forward claims to social recognition, although she had never been able to learn French; she had become very stout, and amid her luxurious surroundings resembled nothing so much as a cook married to her master.

Phellion, the type of the lower middle-class, had as many estimable as absurd qualities. Having been accustomed to a subordinate position during his whole life in the department, he respected his social superiors. For that reason he had nothing to say in Minard's presence. He had succeeded admirably in avoiding the shoals, at the critical period of retirement from office, and this is how he did it. The worthy and excellent man had never been

able to gratify his inclinations. He loved the city of Paris; he was deeply interested in all such matters as the laying out of streets and squares, and in public improvements generally; he was the sort of man who would stand for two hours in front of a house that was being torn down. He might be seen planted fearlessly on his legs, nose in air, waiting for the fall of a stone which a mason was prying out with a crowbar on top of a wall, nor would he leave the place until the stone fell; and when at last it fell, he would go his way as well pleased as an academician could be at the failure of a romantic drama. Genuine supernumeraries of the great social comedy, Phellion, Leudigeois and their fellows played the part of the chorus in the old tragedies. They wept when somebody else wept, laughed when it was time to laugh, and sang as a refrain the story of the public woes and joys; triumphing in their corner over the triumphs of Algiers, Constantine, Lisbon and Saint-Jean-d'Ulloa; deplored alike the death of Napoléon and the sad disasters of Saint-Merri and Rue Transnonnain; bewailing the deaths of illustrious men who were utterly unknown to them. But Phellion, it must be said, appeared in two aspects; he conscientiously weighed the arguments of the opposition and those of the government. Let there be fighting in the streets and Phellion had the courage to declare his opinions before his neighbors; he hurried to Place Saint-Michel, the rendezvous of his battalion, took pity on the government and did his duty. Before and during

the émeute he supported the dynasty, the work of the Days of July; but, as soon as the political prosecutions began he went over to the accused. This innocent *weathercockism* was duplicated in his political opinions; his answer to everything was the Colossus of the North. In his mind, as in that of the old *Constitutionnel*, England was an old lady with a double face; alternately perfidious Albion and the model country; perfidious, when the interests of poor, bruised France, or Napoléon, were at stake; the model country, when the mistakes of the government were under discussion. With the newspaper he admitted the claims of the democratic element, and, in conversation, refused all composition with the republican spirit. The republican spirit meant 1793, the barricades, the Terror, the Agrarian law. The democratic element was the development of the petty bourgeoisie, the reign of the Phelliens.

The honest old fellow was always dignified; dignity is the best epitome of his life. He brought up his children in a dignified way, he was always their father in their eyes and insisted upon being looked up to in his own house as he looked up to the ruling powers and his superiors. He never ran in debt. If he served as a juror, his conscience made him sweat blood and water to follow the intricacies of a lawsuit, and he never laughed even when the court, the audience and the public officials laughed. He was obliging in the last degree and gave away his time and his trouble, everything except his money. Félix Phellion, his son the professor, was his idol;

he believed him to be capable of attaining membership in the Academy of Sciences.

Between the audacious nullity of Minard and the straightforward idiocy of Phellion, Thuillier was like some neutral substance, but he had something in common with them both by virtue of his sad experience. He concealed the emptiness of his brain by a profusion of hackneyed phrases, just as he concealed the yellow skin of his skull with the long threads of gray hair, brought over from behind with infinite skill by his hair-dresser's comb.

"In any other career," he would say, referring to the government employ, "I should have gone ahead much faster."

He had seen that well-doing was possible in theory, but impossible in practice, and that the proper results did not follow from given premises; he was fond of telling about instances of injustice, petty intrigues and the Rabourdin affair.—See *The Civil Service*.

"After that, one can believe in anything and nothing," he would say. "Ah! a government is a villainous thing, and I'm very lucky to not have a son to start in on that hunt for places."

Colleville, always plump and smiling and a good fellow, inveterate punster, maker of anagrams, always busy, was an excellent specimen of the bourgeois of good parts with a taste for raillery,—talent without success, persistent work without result, aimless wit, useless talent, for he was an excellent musician and played only for his daughter,—and with it all an air of good-humored resignation.

This salon was, as will be seen, a sort of provincial salon, illuminated by the glare of the never-ending Parisian conflagration; in its mediocrity and its platitudes it followed the current of the age. The latest expression and the latest thing, for in Paris the expression and the thing are like the horse and its rider, reached there on the rebound. They always waited impatiently for Monsieur Minard, who was likely to know the truth as to affairs of moment. In the Thuillier salon the women were devoted to the Jesuits; the men defended the University; but, as a general rule, the women were content to listen. An intelligent man, if he could have endured the insufferable tedium of these evening parties, would have laughed as heartily as at one of Molière's comedies, to hear such remarks as these after endless discussions:

"Could the Revolution of 1789 have been avoided? Louis the Fourteenth's heavy loans laid the foundation of it. Louis XV., a selfish man, of formal intellect—he said: 'If I were Lieutenant of Police I would suppress cabriolets'—a dissolute king, you've heard of his Parc aux Cerfs!—had much to do with opening the abyss of revolution. Monsieur de Necker, a mischief-making Genevan, gave the signal. Foreigners have always had a grudge against France. The *maximum* injured the Revolution a good deal. As a matter of law Louis XVI. ought not to have been convicted: he'd have been acquitted by a jury. Why did Charles X. fall? Napoléon was a great man, and the details which

prove his genius are all of the nature of anecdotes: he took five pinches of snuff a minute, and kept it in leather-lined pockets made to fasten on his vest. He adjusted all the contractors' accounts; he went to Rue Saint-Denis to find out the price of things. Talma was his friend; Talma taught him his gestures, but he always refused to give Talma a decoration. The Emperor mounted guard for a soldier who fell asleep, so as to prevent his being shot. Such things as that made the soldiers worship him. Louis XVIII., although he was a man of sense, was unjust to him when he called him Monsieur de Buonaparte. The present government's great mistake is in allowing itself to be led instead of leading. They take too low a stand. They're afraid of energetic men; they ought to have torn the treaties of 1815 to bits, and demanded the Rhine from Europe. They play too much with the same men at the ministry."

"We've had enough of this intellectual battle," Mademoiselle Thuillier would say after one of these luminous deliverances; "the altar's all ready; make your little offering."

The old maid always put an end to these discussions, of which the women soon tired, with this remark.

If all these preliminary facts, all these general statements had not been presented, as a sort of introduction, to form a frame for this Scene, to give an idea of the characteristics of this class of society, the drama would perhaps have suffered for the lack of them. Moreover, this sketch is absolutely true to

life, and depicts the morals of a social stratum of some consequence, especially if we consider that the political system of the younger branch of the Bourbons is founded thereon.

The winter of 1839 was, in a way, the time when the Thuillier salon attained its greatest splendor. The Minards came thither almost every Sunday; when they were invited elsewhere for the evening they would begin by passing an hour there, where Minard would generally leave his wife taking his daughter and his eldest son, the advocate, with him. This assiduity on the part of the Minards was due to a meeting that took place—it was strange they had never met before—between Messieurs Métivier, Barbet and Minard, on a certain evening when those desirable tenants had remained somewhat longer than usual talking with Mademoiselle Thuillier. Minard learned from Barbet that the old maid took his notes for about thirty thousand francs at six months at seven and a half per cent, and that she loaned about the same amount to Métivier, so that she must have at least a hundred and eighty thousand francs available.

"I discount notes of the trade at twelve per cent, and take only well-secured paper. Nothing could be more convenient to me," said Barbet. "I say that she has a hundred and eighty thousand francs, for she can't borrow at the Bank for longer than ninety days."

"So she has an account at the Bank?" queried Minard.

"I think so," said Barbet.

As he was on intimate terms with a governor of the Bank, Minard found out that Mademoiselle Thuillier actually had a loan of two hundred thousand francs, secured by a pledge of forty shares. This security was, so he said, quite unnecessary; the Bank had great consideration for a person who was so well known to them and who managed the affairs of Céleste Lemprun, the daughter of a clerk whose service was coeval with the Bank's existence at the time of his retirement. Moreover, Mademoiselle Thuillier had never once overrun her credit in twenty years. She always sent notes for sixty thousand francs a month on three months' time, which made about a hundred and eighty thousand. The shares pledged represented a hundred and twenty thousand, so that they ran no risk whatever, for the notes were always worth sixty thousand. "So, if she should send us a hundred thousand in notes the third month," said the *censeur*, "we shouldn't reject a single one of them. She has a house worth more than a hundred thousand, which isn't mortgaged. Besides, all her notes come from Barbet and Métivier, and have four names on them, including hers."

"Why does Mademoiselle Thuillier work so hard?" Minard asked Métivier.—"That would be a good match for you," he added.

"Oh! I can do better by marrying one of my cousins," was the reply; "my Uncle Métivier has told me all about his business; he has a

hundred thousand a year, and no one but two daughters."

What a close-mouthed creature Mademoiselle Thuillier was, to say nothing of her investments to anyone, not even to her brother; although she tossed into her hoard the sums saved out of Madame Thuillier's income, as well as her own, it would be strange if a ray of light did not finally penetrate beneath the bushel which concealed her treasure.

Dutocq, who haunted Barbet's shop, and who resembled Barbet in more than one point both in character and features, had estimated the savings of the Thuilliers at a hundred and fifty thousand francs in 1838—a more accurate estimate than Minard's—and he was able to keep track of the accretions secretly, by reckoning the probable profit with the aid of that shrewd bill-broker, Barbet.

"Céleste will have from us two hundred thousand francs in cash," said the old maid in confidence to Barbet, "and Madame Thuillier proposes to provide in the marriage-contract that she shall have the reversion of her property. As for myself, my will is all made. My brother will have it all as long as he lives, and Céleste will be my heiress, when he dies. Monsieur Cardot, my notary, is my executor."

Mademoiselle Thuillier urged her brother to renew his former relations with the Saillards, Baudoyers and Falleixes, who occupied a position in the Quartier Saint-Antoine, where Monsieur Saillard was mayor, analogous to that of the Thuilliers and Minards in their quarter. Cardot, the notary, brought

forward a claimant to Céleste's hand in the person of Maître Godeschal, an advocate and successor to Derville,—a man of thirty-six, of good parts; he had paid a hundred thousand francs down for his office and the two hundred thousand of Céleste's *dot* would pay the balance. Minard procured Godeschal's dismissal by informing Mademoiselle Thuillier that Céleste would have for a sister-in-law the notorious Mariette, of the Opera.

"She's out of it," said Colleville, alluding to his wife, "and we'd better not go back again."

"Besides, Monsieur Godeschal's too old for Céleste," said Brigitte.

"And shouldn't we let her marry to her taste," suggested Madame Thuillier, timidly, "and be happy?"

The poor woman had discovered in Félix Phellion's heart a true love for Céleste; love such as a woman trodden under foot by Brigitte and crushed by the indifference of her husband, who cared less for his wife than for a servant, had dreamed that love should be; bold in the heart, timid without; sure of itself, but shrinking; concealed from all eyes, but blooming in solitude. At twenty-three years, Félix Phellion was a gentle-mannered, innocent youth, like all students who cultivate science for science's sake. He had been piously brought up by his father, who took everything seriously and set before him none but good examples, accompanying them with trite maxims. He was a young man of medium height, with light chestnut hair, gray eyes,

skin covered with red blotches; he was endowed with a musical voice, and dignified bearing; he was a good deal of a dreamer, made but few gestures, said nothing that was not worth saying, never contradicted anybody, and was, above all things, incapable of a sordid thought, or of scheming in his own interest.

"That's how I'd have liked my husband to be!" Madame Thuillier would often say to herself.

On a certain evening in the month of February, 1840, the various individuals whose silhouettes have been roughly drawn were assembled in the Thuillier salon. It was near the end of the month. Barbet and Métivier, having to request a loan of thirty thousand francs each from Mademoiselle Brigitte, were playing whist with Monsieur Minard and Phellion. At another table were Julien, the advocate,—a sobriquet bestowed upon the younger Minard by Colleville,—Madame Colleville, Monsieur Barniol and Madame Phellion. A game of *bouillotte* at five sous the chip furnished entertainment to Madame Minard, who knew no other game, Colleville, old Père Saillard and Bandoze, his son-in-law; Laudigeois and Dutocq were waiting for an opportunity to join the game. Mesdames Falleix, Baudoyer, Barniol, and Mademoiselle Minard were playing boston, and Céleste was sitting beside Prudence Minard. Young Phellion was listening to Madame Thuillier and looking at Céleste.

At the other side of the fireplace the Queen Elizabeth of the family sat enthroned upon a couch, as

simply dressed as she had been for thirty years past, for no degree of prosperity could have induced her to change her habits. Her gray hairs were covered by a black gauze cap adorned with Charles X. geraniums; her currant-colored woolen dress with shirred waist cost fifteen francs; her embroidered fichu was worth six francs and only partially concealed the deep furrow between the two muscles that connect the brain with the spinal column. Monvel, playing Augustus in his old age, never exhibited a more gaunt profile than this autocrat's as she sat knitting socks for her brother. In front of the fireplace stood Thuillier, ready to greet any new arrival, and beside him was a youth whose entrance caused a great sensation, when the concierge, who always donned his best coat to attend the guests on Sundays, announced Monsieur Olivier Vinet.

A confidential communication from Cardot to the famous procureur-general, the young magistrate's father, was the occasion of this visit. Olivier Vinet had recently gone from the tribunal of Arcis-sur-Aube to the tribunal of the Seine as deputy king's attorney. Cardot had had Thuillier to dine at his house with the procureur-general, who seemed to be in a fair way to become Minister of Justice, and with his son. Cardot estimated the various sums which would eventually fall to Céleste at no less than seven hundred thousand francs at that moment. Vinet junior seemed delighted to be allowed to visit the Thuilliers on Sundays. In these days large

dowries lead men to do the most idiotic things without shame.

Ten minutes later another young man who had been talking with Thuillier before the deputy's arrival, raised his voice as he waxed warm in a political discussion, and forced the magistrate to follow his example because of the animated tone the discussion thereupon assumed. It bore upon the vote by which the Chamber of Deputies overthrew the ministry of May 12th, refusing the allowance demanded for the Duc de Nemours.

"Assuredly," the young man was saying, "I am far from agreeing with those who support the dynasty, and I am far from approving the accession to power of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie has no more right than the aristocracy formerly had to claim to be the whole state. But still the French bourgeoisie took it upon itself to set up a new dynasty, a monarchy of its own, and this is the way it treats it! When the people allowed Napoléon to rise to supreme power, he created a splendid, monumental fabric; he was proud of his grandeur, and he nobly gave his blood and the sweat of his brow in constructing the edifice of the Empire. Between the magnificence of the aristocratic throne and the imperial purple, between the nobility and the people, the bourgeoisie makes a paltry show; it would pull power down to its level, instead of trying to rise to it. The candle-end economy it practices in its counting-rooms it thinks fit to practice when dealing with princes.

A thing that is praiseworthy in its warehouses is a mistake and crime in the government. I should have been glad of many changes in the people's interest, but I wouldn't have cut down the new Civil List ten millions. Upon becoming almost the only power in France the bourgeoisie ought to give us what the people delight in, splendor without parade, grandeur without class distinctions."

Olivier Vinet's father was at this time on bad terms with the ruling powers; the robe of Keeper of the Seals, which was his dream, took a long while to fall into his hands. So the young deputy hardly knew how to reply, and thought he would do well by agreeing with the speaker on one branch of the question.

"You are right, Monsieur," said Olivier. "But the bourgeoisie has certain duties to France to fulfil, before parading its grandeur. The splendor of which you speak should be postponed to urgent duties. The thing that seems to you so blame-worthy was a necessity of the moment. The Chamber is very far from having its legitimate share in the government; the ministers are less devoted to France than to the crown, and the Parliament has determined that the ministry shall have, as in England, a power of its own and not a borrowed power. When the day comes that the ministry acts on its own responsibility, and represents the Chamber in the executive arm of the government, as the Chamber represents the country, Parliament will be ready to deal very liberally with the crown. That

is the question,—I state it without expressing any opinion, for the duties of my office imply a sort of fealty to the crown, politically speaking.”

“Aside from the political question,” replied the young man, whose tone and accent pointed him out as a child of Provence, “it is true none the less that the bourgeoisie misunderstands its mission; we see procureurs-general, first presidents and peers of France riding in omnibuses, judges who live on their salaries, prefects without means, ministers in debt; whereas the bourgeoisie, when it takes possession of these places, should respect them as the aristocracy always respected them, and, instead of devoting all its energies to making fortunes, as all the scandalous prosecutions show has been done, it ought to give attention to spending the revenues—”

“Who is this young fellow?” thought Olivier Vinet, on hearing him; “is he a relation? Cardot would have done well to come here with me the first time.”

“Who is that little fellow?” Minard inquired of Monsieur Barbet; “I’ve seen him here several times.”

“He’s a tenant,” replied Métivier, as he dealt the cards.

“A lawyer,” said Barbet, in an undertone; “he lives in a small suite on the third-floor front—oh! he’s no great shakes, and he has nothing.”

“What is that young man’s name?” said Olivier Vinet to Monsieur Thuillier.

"Théodore de la Peyrade; he's a lawyer," Thuillier replied in the deputy-attorney's ear.

At that moment the women, as well as the men, were looking at the two youths, and Madame Minard could not help saying to Colleville:

"That's a fine-looking young fellow."

"I have made an anagram for him," said Céleste's father; "his full name, Charles-Marie-Théodore de la Peyrade, makes this prophetic sentence: *Eh! Monsieur payera, de la dot, des oies et le char.*—Eh! monsieur will pay for the dowry with geese and a wagon.—So, my dear Mamma Minard, don't think of giving him your daughter."

"They say that young man's better-looking than my son," said Madame Phellion to Madame Colleville; "what do you think?"

"Why, as far as physique is concerned," was the reply, "a woman might hesitate before making her choice."

At this juncture young Vinet, as he looked over the salon filled with petty bourgeois, thought it would be a shrewd move on his part to extol the bourgeoisie, so he chimed in with the Provençal advocate, saying that those people who were honored with the confidence of the government ought to imitate the king, whose magnificence far surpassed that of the old court; and that to save money out of an official salary was the merest folly. Indeed, could it be done, especially in Paris, where the cost of living had increased threefold, where a magistrate's apartment, for instance, cost three thousand francs a year?—

"My father," said he, in conclusion, "gives me a thousand crowns a year, and with my salary in addition I can hardly live in a style befitting my rank."

When the deputy turned into this boggy road, the Provençal, who had skilfully led him there, exchanged a glance, undetected by anybody, with Dutocq, who was still waiting to take his place at the bouillotte table.

"And they need so many places," said the clerk, "that they talk of appointing two justices of the peace in each arrondissement, so that they'll have twelve more clerkships to dispose of.—As if they could interfere with our vested rights in these places, for which we had to pay such an exorbitant price!"

"I haven't yet had the pleasure of hearing you at the Palace," said the deputy to Monsieur de la Peyrade.

"I am the poor man's advocate, and I plead cases only before the justice of the peace," replied the Provençal.

As she listened to the young magistrate's theory as to the necessity of spending one's income, Mademoiselle Thuillier assumed a prim expression, the meaning of which was well known both to the young Provençal and Dutocq. Young Vinet took his leave with Minard and Julien, the advocate, so that de la Peyrade and Dutocq remained masters of the battle-field in front of the fireplace.

"The upper middle-class," said Dutocq to Thuillier, "will do just as the aristocracy used to do.

The nobility used to look for rich wives to fertilize their estates, our parvenus of to-day are after big *dots* to put hay in their mows."

"That's what Monsieur Thuillier was saying this morning," replied the Provençal, boldly.

"The father," replied Dutocq, "married a Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf, so he has adopted the opinions of the nobility; he must have a fortune at any price, his wife has a royal train."

"Bah!" said Thuillier, in whom the jealousy of one bourgeois for another was at once aroused; "take their places away and those fellows will fall back where they came from."—

Mademoiselle Thuillier began to knit at as furious a pace as if her arms were working by steam.

"Here's your chance, Monsieur Dutocq," said Madame Minard, rising from the bouillotte table. "My feet are cold," she added, drawing near the fire, where the gold ornaments on her turban produced the effect of fireworks in the light shed by the candles of the *Aurora*, which was making fruitless efforts to illuminate the vast salon.

"He's nothing but St. John fire, that deputy fellow!" said Madame Minard, glancing at Mademoiselle Thuillier.

"St. John fire, do you say?" said the Provençal; "that's very clever, Madame—"

"Oh! we have long been accustomed to that sort of thing from Madame," said Beau Thuillier.

Madame Colleville was scrutinizing the young Provençal, and comparing him with young Phellion,

who was talking with Céleste, paying no heed to what was taking place around them. This is certainly the moment to attempt a description of the strange personage, who was destined to play so prominent a part in the lives of the Thuilliers, and who well deserves to be called a great artist.

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There is in Provence, especially in the neighborhood of Avignon, a race of men, with fair or chestnut hair, smooth complexion, and soft eyes, whose expression is rather insipid, calm, or languishing, than keen, ardent, penetrating, as eyes are generally among the Southrons. Let us remark, in passing, that among the Corsicans, who are quick to lose their heads and prone to dangerous fits of anger, we often meet with men of blond type, and of apparently tranquil disposition. These pale, rather stout creatures, with restless green or blue eyes, are the worst species of Provençaux, and Charles-Marie-Théodore de la Peyrade was an excellent specimen of the class, whose constitutions would repay a careful examination on the part of the medical profession and of philosophical physiologists. There seems to be a sort of bile of bitter humor constantly at work in them, which goes to their head and makes them capable of the most savage deeds, however cold they may be in appearance. Being the result of an internal commotion, this sullen violence is irreconcilable with their almost lymphatic exterior, and with the tranquillity of their benign glance.

Born in the suburbs of Avignon, the young Provençal whose name we have just mentioned was of medium stature, well-proportioned, but almost stout; his flesh had a sort of lifeless appearance,—it was

neither livid nor dead-white nor ruddy, but gelatinous; that word alone will convey any idea of the flabby, colorless envelope beneath which lay hidden a mass of nerves, less aptly described as strong and vigorous than as capable of a most determined resistance at critical moments. His eyes, of a pale, cold blue, ordinarily expressed a sort of misleading melancholy, which was likely to possess a great charm for women. His well-shaped brow did not lack distinction and harmonized well with his fine, thin, light chestnut hair, which curled naturally, but slightly, at the ends. His nose was an exact copy of a hunting dog's, flat, cleft at the end, inquisitive, prying, intelligent, and always to the wind; it had an expression of satire and mockery, rather than good-fellowship; but these two aspects of his character were not always visible; it was only when the young man, ceasing to keep watch upon himself, flew into a rage, that he had the power of ejecting the sarcasm and wit which increased tenfold the infernal bitterness of his jests. His mouth, which described a graceful curve between lips of the color of a pomegranate, seemed like the mouth of a marvelous organ, almost soft in its middle tones, to which Théodore generally confined himself, but, in the upper register, vibrating in one's ears like the sound of a gong. This falsetto was the voice of his nerves and his temper. His face, which by virtue of his perfect command over his features was always devoid of expression, was oval in shape. His manners, which were entirely in harmony with

the priest-like tranquillity of his face, were very reserved and proper; but there was a certain pliability and system in his peculiarities; while they never could be characterized as fawning, they did not lack a certain fascination, which, however, could not be explained after it had disappeared. The power of fascination, when it springs from the heart, leaves deep traces; that which is only a product of art, as eloquence is, achieves only ephemeral triumphs; it obtains its effects at any cost. But how many philosophers are there in the world qualified to make the comparison? It almost always happens, to use a slang expression, that the trick is done before ordinary people can see through it.

Everything about this young man of twenty-seven years was in harmony with his real character; he followed his vocation by cultivating philanthropy, the only expression which can be used to explain the profession of a philanthropist. Théodore loved the people, but he made a sharp distinction in his love of mankind. Just as a horticulturist devotes himself to roses, or dahlias, or violets, or geraniums, and pays no attention to the varieties he has not selected for his specialty, this young La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt gave himself to the workman, the proletariat, the poverty-stricken wretches of the Faubourgs Saint-Jacques and Saint-Marceau. The strong man, the genius in distress, the shrinking poor of the bourgeois class he cast out from the bosom of charity. In all maniacs the heart resembles one of the boxes with compartments in which

different kinds of sweetmeats are placed; the *suum cuique tribuere* is their device, they measure out its dose to every duty.

There are philanthropists who have pity only for the errors of the condemned. Vanity certainly forms the basis of philanthropy; but in the case of the Provençal it was self-interest, a rôle deliberately assumed, the part of a liberal and democratic hypocrite played with a perfection which no actor could ever attain. He did not attack the rich, he was content not to understand them; he took them for granted; every man, in his view, was entitled to enjoy the fruit of his own labors; he had been, he said, a fervent disciple of Saint-Simon, but that fault was to be attributed to his extreme youth; modern society could have no other basis than heredity. An ardent Catholic, like all natives of the Comtat, he went to mass very early in the morning, and concealed his piety. Like almost all philanthropists he was extremely stingy, and gave to the poor only his time, advice and eloquence, and the money he extorted from the rich for them. His costume consisted of boots, and a black broad-cloth suit worn until the seams turned white. Nature had done much for Théodore in not endowing him with that rare, virile southern beauty which creates in others cravings of the imagination which it is more than difficult for a man to gratify. As it cost him but little to make himself agreeable, he was a pleasant fellow or a very ordinary one, as he chose, when it suited him. Never since his admission

to the Thuillier circle had he dared, as on the evening in question, to raise his voice and deliver himself so consequentially as he had just ventured to do with Olivier Vinet; but it may well be that Théodore de la Peyrade was not sorry to make an effort to emerge from the shadow in which he had thus far remained; then, too, it was necessary for him to get rid of the young magistrate just as the Minards had formerly demolished the hopes of Godeschal, the advocate. Like all superior minds, for he did not lack elements of superiority, the deputy had not lowered his glances to the level at which the threads of these bourgeois spider-webs become visible, and he had plunged head first, like an unwary fly, into the almost invisible trap to which Théodore had lured him by a stratagem which cleverer men than Olivier might not have suspected.

To complete the portrait of the poor man's lawyer it may not be unprofitable to tell the circumstances of his first appearance in the Thuillier household.

Théodore had come to the house late in the year 1837; having then had his degree in law for five years, he had gone through the necessary course at Paris, preparatory to becoming an advocate; but unknown circumstances, as to which he held his tongue, prevented him from entering his name on the roll of advocates and he was still on probation. But when he was once installed in the little room on the third floor, with the furniture absolutely required for the practice of his noble profession—for the order of advocates will not admit a new member unless

he has a suitable office and library, and it takes measures to satisfy itself on both points—Théodore de la Peyrade became an advocate of the royal court at Paris.

The whole of the year 1838 was occupied in bringing about that change in his situation, and he led a most regular life. He studied at home in the morning until the dinner-hour, and went sometimes to the Palais when an important case was on. Having formed an acquaintance with Dutocq, with great difficulty, according to the latter, he rendered the service of pleading their cases before the tribunal, to some few poor fellows in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques whom the justice's clerk recommended to his charity; he brought their cases before the advocates, who, in accordance with the statutes of their order, attend in turn to the interests of poor litigants, and, as he took none but perfectly sure cases he won them all. Having business relations with some large offices, he became known to the bar by these praiseworthy acts, and these circumstances led in the first place to his admission with some *éclat* to the conference of advocates on probation, and then to his name being inscribed on the roll of the order. Thenceforth he was the poor man's advocate before the justice of the peace, and he continued to be the protector of the common people. Théodore's clients freely expressed their gratitude and their admiration among the concierges, despite the injunctions of the young advocate, and many of his kind offices were soon known to the landlords.

Overjoyed to have so commendable and so charitable a person for their tenant, the Thuilliers determined to lure him to their salon and questioned Dutocq on the subject. The clerk talked as jealous men talk, and, while doing full justice to the young man's talents, said that his avarice was something remarkable, although it might be due to his poverty.

"I have gleaned some information about his early days," said he. "He belongs to the old de la Peyrade family of the Comtat d'Avignon; he came here in the latter part of 1829, looking after an uncle who was supposed to be quite wealthy; he finally found out where he lived just three days after his death, and the household furniture of the defunct just paid the expenses of his funeral and his debts. A friend of this useless uncle sent our fortune-hunter a hundred louis on the condition that he should study law and follow a legal career; these hundred louis paid his expenses for three years in Paris, where he lived like an anchorite; but as he was never able to see or even to find out his unknown patron the poor student was in great distress in 1833.

"He then went into politics and literature, as all law-students do, and kept himself out of actual want for some time; he couldn't hope for anything from his family; his father, the youngest brother of the deceased uncle on Rue des Moineaux, had a flock of eleven children who lived on a small estate called Canquoëlles.

"At last he joined a ministerial journal managed

by the famous Cérizet, who acquired such great celebrity on account of the persecution he was subjected to under the Restoration for his attachment to the liberals, and whom the men of the New Left have never forgiven for becoming a supporter of the ministry. As the ruling powers of to-day take but little trouble to defend their most devoted adherents, witness the Gisquet affair, the republicans succeeded at last in ruining Cérizet. I say this to explain to you how it happens that Cérizet is now a copyist in my office.

"Well, in the days when he was flourishing as the manager of a newspaper set up by the Perier ministry to repel the attacks of incendiary journals like the *Tribune* and others of that stamp, Cérizet, who is a good sort of fellow after all, but is a little too fond of wine, women and song, was very useful to Théodore, who was his political editor; and had it not been for the death of Casimir Perier the youngster would have been appointed deputy king's attorney for Paris. In 1834 and 1835 he was down again, despite his talent, for his collaboration in the ministerial journal injured him. 'If it had not been for my religious principles,' he said to me at that time, 'I should have thrown myself into the Seine.' It seems, however, that his uncle's friend found him out in his misery, for he received the wherewithal to defray the necessary expenses of becoming an advocate; but he still is entirely ignorant of the name and abode of this mysterious patron. After all, his economy is excusable under

the circumstances, and he must have a deal of strength in his character to refuse what the poor devils offer him when he wins their cases for them. It's a shameful thing to see people speculating on the impossibility of the poor wretches paying in advance the costs of the unjust suits they bring against them. Oh! it will come at last; I sha'n't be surprised to see that boy reach a very brilliant position; he's persistent and honest and brave! He studies and digs away at his work."

Notwithstanding the favorable reception accorded him, de la Peyrade wore a very grave face in the Thuillier salon. But when they scolded him for his reserve he appeared more frequently and ended by going there every Sunday; he was invited to all the dinner-parties, and he became so intimate in the family that if he came to the house to speak to Thuillier about four o'clock, they would force him to sit down and take *pot-luck* with them.

"Then we can be sure that the poor fellow will have a good dinner," Mademoiselle Thuillier would say.

A social phenomenon, which has certainly been remarked, but which has never as yet been formulated, published if you choose, although it well deserves to be, is the return of the customs, manners and modes of thought of their earlier days, in the case of some people who, between youth and old age, have risen above the condition of life in which they were born. Thus, morally speaking, Thuillier had become the concierge's son once more; he

repeated some of his father's jokes, and ended by allowing a little of the mire of his early life to appear on the surface, in his declining days.

Five or six times a month, when the meat soup was particularly good, he would say, as if it were an entirely novel proposition, laying his spoon in his empty place: "That's better than a kick on the shins!" When he heard this jocose sally for the first time, Théodore, who was not familiar with it, lost his gravity, and laughed so heartily that Thuillier's, Beau Thuillier's, vanity was tickled as it never had been before. After that Théodore always greeted that particular joke with a slight appreciative smile. This trifling detail will account for the fact that, on the morning of the same day when Théodore had his skirmish with the young deputy, he made free to say to Thuillier, as they were walking in the garden to see the effect of the frost:

"You have much more mind than you think!"

And received this reply:

"In any other career, my dear Théodore, I should have risen very high, but the fall of the Emperor broke my neck."

"There's time yet," said the young advocate. "In the first place, tell me what that mountebank of a Colleville ever did to get the Cross?"

With that question Maitre de la Peyrade put his finger on the wound that Thuillier concealed from every eye, so that not even his sister suspected it; but the younger man, who took great interest in

studying the characters of all these good bourgeois, had guessed at the secret jealousy which was gnawing at the heart of the ex-deputy-chief.

"If you, with all your experience, will do me the honor to follow my advice," added the philanthropist, "and above all things never mention our agreement to anybody, not even your good sister, unless I consent, I will undertake to procure a decoration for you with the approval of the whole quarter."

"Oh! if we should succeed," cried Thuillier, "you don't know what I would be to you!"—

This explains why Thuillier bridled up so, a moment before, when Théodore had the audacity to loan him opinions.

In the arts, and perhaps Molière has raised hypocrisy to the level of an art, by placing Tartuffe forever among actors, there exists a perfection, beneath which comes mere talent, and which genius alone attains. There is so little difference between the work of genius and the work of talent, that men of genius alone can realize the distance that separates Raphael from Correggio, Titian from Rubens. More than that, the ordinary observer is completely deceived therein. The stamp of genius is a certain appearance of facility. In a word, its work should appear no more than ordinary at first glance, it is always so true to nature even in the most lofty subjects.

Many peasant women hold their children as the celebrated Dresden Madonna holds her child. The

acme of art, in a man of Théodore's strength of character, is so to act that it will be said of him later: "Anybody might have been taken in by him!" Now, he saw that a spirit of contradiction was beginning to crop out in the Thuillier salon; he detected in Colleville the keen and critical nature of the unsuccessful artist. The advocate knew that he was disliked by Colleville, who, as the result of circumstances not worth recording, was led to believe implicitly in the science of anagrams. No one of his anagrams had ever failed to speak the truth. They made fun of him in the department, when upon being asked for the anagram of poor Auguste-Jean-François Minard's name, he produced this: *J'amassai une si grande fortune*,—I amassed such a great fortune—but the event justified the anagram ten years later. Théodore's anagram was fatal. His own wife's made him tremble, and he had never told of it, for Flavie Minard Colleville yielded: *La vieille C—, nom flétrit, vole.*—Old C—, tarnished name, steals.

Several times prior to the evening in question Théodore had made advances to the jovial mayor's secretary, and felt distinctly repelled by a frigid demeanor most unnatural in so talkative a person. When the game of bouillotte was at an end Colleville led Thuillier into a window recess, and said to him:

"You're letting that advocate fellow get too much of a footing here; he bore the brunt of the conversation to-night."

"Thanks, my friend, a man warned is as good as two," replied Thuillier, inwardly sneering at Colleville.

Théodore, who was talking with Madame Colleville at the moment, had his eyes on the two friends, and with the same prescience that enables women to divine when people are talking about them and what they are saying, from one corner of a salon to another, he divined that Colleville was trying to injure him in the esteem of the weak and asinine Thuillier.

"Madame," he said in the pious creature's ear, "if there is anyone here able to appreciate you I am the one. Seeing you here one would say that a pearl had fallen into the mud; you are not forty-two years old, for a woman is only as old as she seems to be, and many women of thirty who are greatly inferior to you would be only too glad to have your figure and that sublime face over which love has passed without ever filling the void in your heart. You have given yourself to God, I know, and I have too much religious feeling to seek to be anything more than your friend; but you gave yourself to him because you never found any mortal worthy of you. In short, you have been loved, but you have never felt that you were adored; that I have guessed.—But there's your husband, who has never been able to place you in the position to which your merit entitles you; he hates me as if he suspected me of being in love with you, and prevents me from telling you of the means I think I have found of placing you

in the sphere which you were made to adorn.—No, madame," he added aloud, rising as he spoke, "the Abbé Gondrin is not to preach the lenten sermons this year at our humble church of Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas; we are to have Monsieur d'Estival, a countryman of mine, who has devoted himself to preaching in the interest of the poorer classes, and you will hear one of the most impressive preachers I know; a priest, whose exterior is far from attractive, but what a soul!"—

"My longing will be gratified, then," said poor Madame Thuillier, "for I have never been able to understand the famous preachers!"

A smile played about the lips of Mademoiselle Thuillier and of several others in the company.

"They're thinking altogether too much of theological demonstrations; that's been my opinion for a long time," said Théodore; "but I never talk religion, and except for Madame *de Colleville*—"

"So they have demonstrations in theology, do they?" was the innocent inquiry of the matter-of-fact professor of mathematics.

"I do not think, Monsieur," replied Théodore, looking Félix Phellion in the face, "that you asked that question seriously."

"Félix," said Phellion the elder, coming clumsily to his son's assistance as he detected a pained expression on Madame Thuillier's face, "Félix divides religion into two categories: he looks at it from a human standpoint and from a divine standpoint, tradition and common-sense."

"What heresy, Monsieur!" rejoined Théodore; "religion is indivisible; it demands faith before all else."

Père Phellion, transfixed by that sentence, glanced at his wife:

"It's time, my dear—"

And he pointed to the clock.

"Oh! Monsieur Félix," whispered Céleste to the straightforward mathematician, "couldn't you be a scholar and religious at the same time, like Pascal and Bossuet?"—

The Phelliens, when they left the house, took the Collevilles with them; and soon nobody was left but Dutocq, Théodore and the Thuilliers.

Théodore's flattering remarks to Flavie savored strongly of the commonplace; but it should be observed, in fairness to this narrative, that the advocate kept himself on the level of these commonplace minds; he sailed in their waters and spoke their language. His painter was Pierre Grassou, not Joseph Bridau; his book was *Paul et Virginie*. The greatest living poet in his opinion was Casimir Delavigne; in his eyes the mission of art was utility before all else. Parmentier, the *author of The Potato*, he considered to be worth twenty Raphaels; the man in the little blue cloak seemed to him a *Sister of Charity*. He sometimes remembered these expressions of Thuillier's.

"This young Félix Phellion," he said, "is the type of the university man of our day, the product of a science which has put God to flight. Great

Heavens! what are we coming to? There is nothing but religion that can save France, for there's nothing but the fear of hell to preserve us from domestic theft, which is carried on every day in every household, and eats into the fortunes of the wealthiest. You all have a secret war on hand in the bosom of your family."

With this shrewd outburst, which made a deep impression upon Brigitte, he took his leave, followed by Dutocq, after wishing the Thuilliers good-night.

"That young fellow is full of expedients!" remarked Thuillier, sententiously.

"Faith, he is," said Brigitte, as she put out the lamps.

"He's a religious man," said Madame Thuillier, leading the way from the salon.

"Môsieur," said Phellion to Colleville, when they were abreast of the School of Mines and he had made sure that they were alone in the street, "it is my custom to yield my opinions to those of other people, but I can't help thinking that that young lawyer carries things with a pretty high hand at our friends, the Thuilliers'."

"My private opinion," replied Colleville, who was walking with Phellion behind their wives and Céleste, all three of whom were arm in arm, "is that he's a Jesuit, and I don't like those fellows.—The best of them is good for nothing. To my mind the Jesuit means knavery, and knavery ready to cheat; they cheat for the sake of cheating,—to keep their

hand in, you might say. That's my opinion and I make no bones about giving it."

"I understand you, Monsieur," said Phellion, taking Colleville's arm.

"No, Monsieur Phellion," chimed in Flavie in a shrill voice, "you don't understand Colleville, but I know what he means, and he'll do well to stop where he is.—That sort of thing isn't to be discussed in the street at eleven at night, and in a young lady's presence."

"You are right, wife," said Colleville.

When they reached Rue des Deux-Églises, which Phellion was to take, they bade one another good-night. Félix Phellion thereupon said to Colleville:

"Monsieur, your son François might enter the Polytechnic School if he were thoroughly coached; I will undertake to fit him to pass the examinations this year."

"That's an offer not to be refused! thanks, my friend," said Colleville; "we'll see about it."

"Good!" said Phellion to his son.

"That's very clever of you!" cried the mother.

"Why, what do you see in it?" asked Félix.

"Why, it's a very shrewd way of paying court to Céleste's parents."

"May I never solve my problem if I thought of such a thing!" cried the young professor; "I learned from talking with the little Collevilles that François has a bent for mathematics, and I thought it my duty to enlighten his father—"

"It's all right, my son!" said Phellion, "I

wouldn't have you other than you are. My wishes are fulfilled, for my son is upright and honorable, he has the civic and private virtues which I wish him to have."

"Colleville," said Flavie, when Céleste was safely in bed, "don't express your opinion of people so bluntly without knowing them thoroughly. When you talk of Jesuits I know you're thinking of priests, and I beg you to do me the favor of keeping your ideas about religion to yourself whenever you're in your daughter's presence. We have the right to sacrifice our own souls, but not our children's.—Would you like to have a creature without any religion for your daughter's husband?—You see, my boy, that we're at everybody's mercy; we have four children to provide for, and can you say that, sometime or other, you may not need this man's help or that man's? So don't go making enemies; you haven't any now, for you're a good fellow, and, thanks to that quality, which, in your case, amounts to fascination, we have got along pretty well so far!"—

"Enough! enough!" said Colleville, throwing his coat on a chair and untying his cravat; "I am wrong and you're right, my dear Flavie."

"At the first opportunity, my dear old sheep," said the sly creature, patting her husband's cheek, "try to be civil to that young lawyer; he's a shrewd one, and we must have him on our side. He's playing a comedy, you say?—very good, play it with him; pretend to be his dupe, and if he really has talent, and a future, make a friend of him. Do you suppose

I want to see you tied forever to your mayor's office?"'

"Come, Mother Colleville," laughed the quondam first clarionet of the Opéra-Comique, patting his knee to indicate the position he wished his wife to take, "let's warm our toes and chat.—When I look at you I am more and more convinced of the truth that a woman's youth is in her figure—"

"And in her heart—"

"Both," rejoined Colleville; "a slender figure and a heavy heart—"

"No, no, you great idiot—deep."

"The good thing about you is that you have preserved your white skin without resorting to corpulence!—But then—you have small bones.—Look you, Flavie, if I were beginning life over again, I wouldn't have any other wife than you."

"You know very well that I have always preferred you to *the others*.—What a pity Monseigneur is dead! Do you know what I'd like for you?"'

"No."

"A place in the employ of the city of Paris, with twelve thousand francs a year or so; something like a cashier's place, either at the city treasury or the one at Poissy, or else a manufacturer."

"Any of those would suit me."

"Well, suppose that beast of an advocate could do something for you in that line? he's a schemer; let's make up to him.—I'll sound him—let me have my way—and above all things don't interfere with his game at the Thuilliers'!"'

Théodore had touched the sore spot in Flavie Colleville's heart; this requires an explanation which may have some value as a comprehensive glance at the life of women in general.

At forty years of age a woman, especially a woman who has nibbled at the poisoned apple of passion, has a feeling of solemn dismay; she realizes that for her there are two deaths in store: the death of the body and the death of the heart. Considering women as divided into two great categories corresponding to the ideas most commonly accepted,—calling them *virtuous* or *guilty*,—we may be allowed to say that when their years reach that lamentable figure they are conscious of the keenest, most atrocious suffering. If they be *virtuous* and foiled in the desires with which nature endowed them, whether they have had the courage to submit, or have buried their rebellious impulses in their hearts or at the altar's foot, they can not say to themselves, without agony, that everything is at an end for them. This thought has such strange, diabolical possibilities that in it may be found the explanation of many of those cases of apostasy, which at times surprise and terrify society. If they be *guilty*, they find themselves in one of those distracting plights which often, alas! lead to madness, or end in death, or in outbursts of passion as terrific as the situation itself.

This crisis may be thus expressed in the form of a *dilemma*: Either they have been happy, have made a virtue of their happiness, and can breathe

only that incense-laden air, can live only in that perfumed atmosphere in which every flattering word is a caress,—and in that case how can they renounce it all? Or—and this phenomenon is even more curious than rare—they have found only fatiguing pleasure in pursuit of a happiness which constantly eluded them, sustained in the eager chase by the teasing incitements of vanity, priding themselves on the game they are playing as a gambler prides himself upon his nerve; for, to them, these last days of beauty are the last stake on the green cloth of despair.

"You have been loved, but not adored!"

This remark from Théodore, accompanied by a keen glance which read, not her heart but her life, was the solution of a riddle, and Flavie felt that she was detected.

The advocate had repeated some few ideas which frequent use has made mere truisms; but of what consequence is the material or the shape of the whip, when it strikes the gall on the race-horse's flank? The poetry was in Flavie and not in the ode, just as the noise is not in the avalanche, although it occasions it.

A young officer, two dandies, a banker, a stupid young man and poor Colleville,—that was a melancholy list of attempts. Once in her life Madame Colleville had dreamed of happiness, but had not really known it; for death made haste to put an end to the only passion in which Flavie had found any real charm. She then listened two years to the

voice of religion, which told her that neither the church nor the Society of Jesus has aught to say of happiness or love, but only of duty and resignation; that, in the estimation of those two great powers, happiness consists in the satisfaction caused by the performance of difficult or painful duties, and that the reward is not to be looked for in this world. But she heard at the same time a much shriller voice than that; and, inasmuch as her religion was simply a mask it was necessary to wear, and not a real conversion, as she did not choose to lay it aside because she saw in it a possible resource, and as devotion, whether real or feigned, was an accomplishment adapted to adorn her future, she remained in the church, as if it were a cross-road in the middle of a forest, seated on a bench, reading the sign-posts, and awaiting what chance might bring to pass, as she felt that night was at hand.

So it was that her interest was keenly aroused when she heard Théodore describe her secret plight without any appearance of intending to take advantage of it, but directing his attack against that part of her existence which was purely internal, and promising to build for her upon a stable foundation a castle in Spain which had been seven or eight times demolished.

Since the beginning of the winter she had noticed that Théodore was observing her closely and studying her, although he did it by stealth. More than once she had arrayed herself in her gray watered silk, her best black lace, and her head-dress of

flowers interwoven with mechlin, in order to show herself to the best advantage, and men always know when a toilette has been made for their benefit. The ghastly old dandy of the Empire murdered her with vulgar flattery, she was the queen of the salon, but the Provençal said still a thousand times more with one of his sly glances.

From Sunday to Sunday Flavie awaited a declaration.

"He knows that I am ruined and haven't a sou!" she would say to herself. "Perhaps he is really pious."

Théodore did not propose to hurry matters, and like a skilful conductor he had marked the place in the symphony where the blow was to be struck on the tom-tom. When he saw that Colleville was trying to arouse Thuillier's suspicions in his regard, he fired his broadside, which he had carefully prepared during the three or four months he had been studying Flavie, and he had succeeded with her as he had succeeded in the morning with Thuillier.

As he got into bed he said to himself:

"The wife is on my side, but the husband can't endure me; about this time they'll be quarreling, and I shall come out ahead, for she does what she pleases with her husband."

The Provençal was mistaken in this; there had not been the slightest disagreement, and Colleville was sleeping beside his dear little Flavie, while she was saying to herself:

"Théodore is a superior man."

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Many men owe their superiority, as La Peyrade did, to the audacity or difficulty of the task they undertake; the strength they put forth increases the size of their muscles, they exert themselves prodigiously; and then, whether they attain success or make a failure, the world is amazed to find what small, pitiful, worn-out creatures they are. After he had excited to a feverish pitch the curiosity of the two persons upon whom Céleste's fate depended, Théodore played the busy man: for five or six days he was away from the house from morning till night, so that he did not see Flavie again until her desire had reached the point at which one disregards proprieties; and so that he compelled the old beau to come to him.

On the following Sunday he felt almost certain of finding Madame Colleville at church; as a matter of fact they left the church at the same moment and met on Rue des Deux-Églises; Théodore offered his arm to Flavie, who accepted it, bidding her daughter go on before with her brother Anatole. The latter, a boy of twelve, was to enter the Seminary, and was a day-scholar at the Barniol institution, receiving elementary instruction; naturally enough Phellion's son-in-law had made a reduction in the price of tuition in view of the hoped-for union between Phellion and Céleste.

"Have you done me the honor and the favor to think over what I said to you so awkwardly the other day?" the advocate inquired in a wheedling tone of the pretty devotee, pressing her arm against his heart with a movement that was at once gentle and strong, as if he were putting constraint upon his impulses in order to appear duly respectful. "Do not misunderstand my meaning," he continued, as he received from Madame Colleville one of those glances which women broken to the harness of passion have at command, and which, so far as their expression goes, are equally consistent with stern indignation and with secret harmony of sentiment. "I love you as one loves a beautiful character in the toils of misfortune; Christian charity ministers to the strong as well as to the weak, and its treasures are the property of all. Lovely, graceful, refined as you are, made to be the ornament of the highest society, what man can look upon you without boundless, heartfelt compassion, mingling with these hateful plebeians who know nothing of you, not even the inestimable value of one of your aristocratic gestures, of one of your glances, or of one of the charming tones of your voice! Ah! if I were rich!—ah! if I had the power, your husband, who is certainly a good sort of fellow, should be receiver-general, and you would procure his election as deputy! But I am a poor, ambitious devil, whose first duty it is to silence my ambition, finding myself at the bottom of the bag like the last number on a family lottery ticket, and I can offer you my arm

only, instead of offering you my heart. I have everything to hope from an advantageous marriage, and I pray you to believe that I would not only make my wife happy, but she should be one of the first in the land, as I should receive from her the means of achieving success.—It's a lovely day, come and take a turn in the Luxembourg," he added, as they reached Rue d'Enfer and Madame Colleville's house, opposite which was a passage leading to the Luxembourg garden by way of the staircase of a small building, the last fragment of the famous Carthusian convent.

The pliability of the arm he held denoted tacit acquiescence on Flavie's part, but, as she was entitled to the distinction of being constrained to go, he drew her quickly across the street, adding:

"Come! we sha'n't often have so good an opportunity.—Oh!" he exclaimed, "your husband's looking at us; he's at the window; let's walk slowly—"

"Have no fear of Monsieur Colleville," said Flavie, with a smile, "he leaves me entirely free to do as I choose."

"Ah! you are the woman I have dreamed of!" cried the Provençal, with the enthusiasm which burns only in Southern hearts and the accent which issues from none but Southern lips. "Forgive me, Madame," he continued, recovering his self-possession and returning from a higher world to the banished angel at his side, at whom he gazed with pious veneration; "forgive me! I return to what I

was saying.—Ah! how can one fail to feel sympathy for the sorrows one experiences one's self, when one sees that they have fallen to the lot of a being to whom life should bring naught but joy and happiness!—Your suffering is mine; I am no more in my proper place than you are in yours; the same ill-fortune makes us brother and sister. Dear Flavie! the first day that I was permitted to see you,—it was the last Sunday in September, 1838,—you were very lovely; I shall see you often again in that pretty woolen dress with the tartan of some Scotch clan or other!—That day I said to myself: ‘Why is that woman at the Thuilliers?’ and why has she ever had relations with a Thuillier?””

“Monsieur!” exclaimed Flavie, terrified at the turn the Provençal was giving to their conversation.

“Oh! I know all about it,” he cried, accompanying his words with an expressive movement of the shoulder, “and I have worked out my own explanation—and I think none the less of you for it. Bah! it isn’t the sin of an ugly woman or a cripple.—You have to reap the fruits of your error and I’ll help you to do it! Céleste will be very rich, and therein lies your hope for the future; you can have but one son-in-law, so be shrewd enough to choose him wisely. An ambitious man may become a minister, but he will humiliate you, worry you to death and make your daughter unhappy; and if he throws her fortune away he’ll never pick it up again, that you may be sure of. Yes, I love you,” said he, “and I love you with a love that knows no bounds; you

are above all the paltry considerations in which fools entangle themselves. Let us understand each other.—”

Flavie's breath was taken away; she was nevertheless conscious of the extreme freedom of such language, and she said to herself: “He doesn't mince matters, at all events!”—But she inwardly confessed that she had never been so deeply moved and stirred as by this young man.

“Monsieur, I can't imagine who can have led you astray concerning my past, or by what right—”

“Ah! forgive me, Madame,” interposed the Provençal, with a coldness bordering upon contempt, “I have been dreaming. I said to myself: ‘She is all that!’ but I was deceived by appearances. I know now why you will always remain on the fourth floor over yonder on Rue d'Enfer.”

He enforced his words with an emphatic gesture, pointing to the windows of Colleville's apartments, which could be seen from the avenue in the Luxembourg where they were walking, alone in that vast field ploughed by so many youthful ambitions.

“I have been perfectly frank and I expected reciprocity. I have known what it is to be without bread, Madame; I have succeeded in living, studying law, and obtaining my degree here in Paris, with two thousand francs for my whole capital, and I had entered the city through the Barrière d'Italie with five hundred francs in my pocket, swearing, like one of my compatriots, that I would some day be one of the first men in the land.—And the man

who has often taken his food from the baskets in which the restaurant-keepers throw their refuse, and which are emptied at their doors at six in the morning, when the scavengers have got through with them—that man will not recoil from any avowable expedient.—Do you believe me to be a friend of the people?—” he continued with a smile; “fame must have a speaking-trumpet, you know; it can hardly make itself heard speaking in its natural voice!—and without fame of what use is talent? The poor man’s advocate will be the rich man’s.—Is it enough to open your mind to me? Open your heart.—Say: ‘Let us be friends,’ and we shall both be happy some day.”—

“My God! why did I come here? why did I take your arm?—” cried Flavie.

“Because your destiny so willed!” he replied.—“Oh! my dear, darling Flavie,” he added, pressing her arm against his heart, “did you expect to hear mere commonplace talk from me?—We are brother and sister, that’s the whole story.”

And he escorted her back toward the passage, to return to Rue d’Enfer.

Flavie was conscious of a feeling of terror beneath the satisfaction which violent emotions afford all women, and she mistook this terror for the sort of dismay consequent upon a new passion; but she felt that she was under a spell and she walked along in utter silence.

“Of what are you thinking?” queried Théodore in the middle of the passage.

"Of all that you have said to me," was her reply.

"Why," he retorted, "at our age one can dispense with preliminaries; we aren't children and we are both moving in a sphere in which people ought to understand one another. However," he added, as they came out on Rue d'Enfer, "remember this, that I am entirely at your service."

And he bowed to the ground.

"The irons are in the fire!" he said to himself as he looked after his bewildered victim.

As he was returning to his own room, Théodore found upon the landing an individual who is to play what might be called a submarine part in this narrative, like the buried church upon which rests the façade of a palace. The sight of this man, who, after ringing to no purpose at Théodore's door, had just rung at Dutocq's, made the young Provençal advocate shudder, but it was an internal shudder, and nothing in his external appearance betrayed his deep emotion. This man was Cérezet, whom Dutocq had mentioned to Thuillier as his copyist.

Cérezet, although he was but thirty eight, looked to be a man of fifty, for everything that can bring old age prematurely upon a man had combined to produce that effect upon him. His head, entirely bereft of hair, afforded a view of a yellowish skull, badly covered by a wig which had turned red in spots. His pale, flabby face, coarse beyond expression, was the more horrible to look at, in that the nose was partially eaten away, but not to such an

extent that he could resort to a false organ to replace it; from the top of the nose, where it joins the forehead, to the nostrils, it existed as nature made it; but the horrible disease, after eating away the wings toward the end, left only two holes of a curious shape,—the result being that his pronunciation was impaired and speech made difficult for him. His eyes, which were once handsome, but had been weakened by abuse of every description and by nights passed without sleep, were red around the rims, and had changed tremendously for the worse; his look, when it was charged with malice by his evil heart, would have terrified judges or criminals,—those persons, that is to say, whom nothing terrifies.

His mouth, quite unfurnished save for a few black stumps of teeth, gave a threatening expression to his face; from it oozed a fine, frothy saliva which never got beyond the thin, colorless lips. Cérezet was a small man, dried up rather than lean; he tried to make up for his ugliness of feature by his costume, and although he did not dress richly, his dress was always scrupulously neat, but perhaps that very quality only served to make its shabbiness more noticeable. In him everything seemed doubtful, everything partook of the character of his age and his nose and his look. It was impossible to say whether he was thirty-eight years old or sixty, whether his blue pantaloons, faded to be sure, but very well-fitting, would soon be in fashion, or were in fashion in the year 1835. His boots, down at the

heel and thrice patched, but carefully polished—they were fine shoes in their day—had perhaps walked upon ministerial carpets. His frogged overcoat, shrunken by exposure to the rain, whereon the olive-shaped buttons were so indiscreet as to afford glimpses of their moulds, bore witness by its shape to its bygone elegance. His satin neck-cloth very luckily concealed his linen, but it was torn behind by the tongue of the buckle, and the gloss of the satin was heightened by a sort of oil distilled from the wig.

In the days of its youth his waistcoat did not lack freshness, but it was one of the waistcoats which are sold for four francs and come from the depths of the stock of a dealer in ready-made clothing. Everything was carefully brushed, like his shiny, battered silk hat. Each part of the costume was in harmony with every other, and reconciled one to the black gloves that concealed the hands of this secondary Mephistopheles, whose life prior to his introduction to the reader is here presented in a few words.

He was an artist in evil, with whom, at the beginning, evil had proved successful, so that, led on by his early good luck, he continued to devise infamous schemes, keeping always within the law. Having become manager of a printing-office by betraying his master, he had been convicted of conducting a liberal newspaper; and in the provinces, during the Restoration, he was one of the *bêtes noires* of the government and was the *unfortunate Cérieret*, like the unfortunate Chauvet and the

heroic Mercier. To this reputation for patriotism he owed his appointment as a sub-prefect in 1830; six months after, he was dismissed; but he claimed that he was tried without a hearing, and he made such an outcry that under the ministry of Casimir Perier he became manager of an anti-republican journal in the pay of the ministry. He abandoned that to go into business on his own account, and one of his ventures proved to be one of the most rascally of stock-company swindles; it was investigated by the criminal tribunals, and he proudly submitted to the severe sentence he received, declaring that it was mere underhand vengeance on the part of the republicans, who, he said, would never forgive him for dealing them such rough blows in his journal, inflicting ten wounds for their one. He served his sentence in a hospital. The government finally felt ashamed of a man who was brought up in a founding asylum, and whose intemperate habits and shameful exploits in connection with a former banker named Claparon, had finally brought him into well-deserved disrepute. Thus Céritzet, having fallen by degrees to the lowest rung of the social ladder, had to depend upon some lingering feeling of pity to obtain the place of copyist in Dutocq's office. In his hopeless poverty the man dreamed of revenge, and as he had nothing more to lose, no means were too base for him. Dutocq and he found in their depraved habits a bond of union. Céritzet was to Dutocq, in the quarter, what the hound is to the hunter. Céritzet, being acquainted with all the

requirements of all kinds of misfortune, practised that gutter variety of usury called extortion; he began by sharing with Dutocq, and the former Paris gamin, become the banker of the women hawkers, the bill-discounter of chair-porters, was the pest of two faubourgs.

"Well," said Céritet, as Dutocq opened his door, "Théodore has come home, so let's go up to his room."

The poor man's lawyer stepped aside to allow his two friends to precede him.

The three men passed through a small room with a polished tile floor, where the light shone in through calico curtains upon a layer of red encaustic, disclosing to view a modest round black walnut table and a walnut buffet, on which stood a lamp. Thence, they passed into a tiny red-curtained salon, furnished in mahogany covered with red Utrecht velvet; the wall opposite the windows was occupied by a library filled with books on jurisprudence. On the mantel-piece were a few common ornaments: a clock with four mahogany pillars, and candles under glass. The office, where the three friends proceeded to seat themselves before a peat fire, was the typical office of an advocate just beginning practice: the furniture consisted of a desk, the regulation arm-chair, narrow green silk curtains at the windows, a green carpet, a case for boxes, and a couch, above which was an ivory crucifix upon a velvet background. The bedroom, kitchen and the other rooms of the suite looked on the court-yard.

"Well," said Cérezet, "is everything going on all right? Are we getting ahead?"

"Why, yes," replied Théodore.

"You must agree that it was a brilliant idea of mine," cried Dutocq, "to think out a way of inveigling that idiot of a Thuillier."—

"Yes, but I'm not behind hand," cried Cérezet; "I have come this morning to bring you the cords to tie the old maid up by the thumbs and make her spin round like a teetotum.—Don't make any mistake! Mademoiselle Thuillier is everything in this business; with her on our side the place is taken. Let us talk a bit, but let's speak our minds, as befits clever men like us. My old partner, Claparon, is a fool, as you know, and he ought to be all his life just what he was, a mere dummy. Well, at this moment his name is being used by a Paris notary who is mixed up with certain building-contractors, and they're all coming to grief, notary and masons and all! Claparon has to stand the brunt of it: he has never failed, but there has to be a first time for everything, and at this moment he's in hiding in my shanty on Rue des Poules, where no one will ever find him. My Claparon is in a fearful rage, for he hasn't a sou; and among the five or six houses to be sold in liquidation there's a little gem of a house, built of cut stone, close to the Madeleine,—the front ornamented like a melon, with delicious sculptures,—but it isn't finished and won't fetch more than a hundred thousand francs; by spending twenty-five thousand on it, it may be worth ten thousand a year a couple of

years hence. By suggesting to Mademoiselle Thuillier to become the proprietor of that piece of property, you will become her love, for you can make her understand that you can put such opportunities in her way every year. The way to get hold of vain people is either to flatter their self-esteem or to frighten them; you have a miser under your thumb when you attack his purse or when you fill it for him. And as we're working for ourselves, after all, by working for Thuillier, why we must let him have the benefit of this stroke of business."

"And the notary," said Dutocq; "why does he let things go?"

"The notary, my dear fellow? he's just the man who saves us! Being compelled to sell his office, and utterly ruined besides, he has reserved this portion of the ruin for himself. Trusting to the honesty of Claparon the imbecile, he has left it to him to find a nominal purchaser; for trustworthiness is as essential as prudence in his agent. We will let him think that Mademoiselle Thuillier is an unsuspecting creature who lends her name to poor Claparon, and they'll both be taken in, Claparon and the notary, too. I owe my friend Claparon this little trick, for he left me to bear the whole brunt of that stock-company business, in which we were put under the harrow by Couture—I wouldn't like you to be in his skin, by the way!" he said, with a gleam of infernal hatred in his lack-lustre eyes. "I have said my say, Messeigneurs!" he added, raising his voice, which issued entirely from his nasal cavities, and striking

a theatrical attitude; for, at one time, when he was in the last stages of poverty, he had taken to the boards.

As he concluded his harangue, some one rang the bell and La Peyrade went to open the door.

"Are you still satisfied with him?" Cérezet asked Dutocq. "There's a something about him,—you see I'm a connoisseur in treachery."

"He is so entirely in our power," said Dutocq, "that I don't take the trouble to watch him; but, between ourselves, I had no idea he was so much of a man as he is.—You see we thought we were putting a frisky horse between the legs of a man who didn't know how to ride, and the rascal turns out to be an old jockey! That's the whole story—"

"Let him beware!" said Cérezet, threateningly; "I can blow him over like a house built of cards. As for you, Papa Dutocq, you can see him at work and watch him every moment; keep your eye on him! However, I have a way of feeling him by having Claparon propose to him to throw us over, and we can judge him then.—"

"That's all right," said Dutocq, "you haven't got cold in your eyes."

"*I know a thing or two, that's all!*" said Cérezet.

These words were exchanged in a low voice while Théodore answered the door-bell and returned to them. Cérezet was looking around the office when the advocate reappeared.

"It's Thuillier," said Théodore; "I was expecting him; he's in the salon now.—He mustn't see

Céritet's overcoat," he added, with a smile; "those frogs would make him uneasy."

"Nonsense! you receive poor devils here; that's part of your game.—Are you in need of money?" added Céritet, producing a hundred francs from his fob. "There, there, that'll do nicely."

And he placed the pile of coins on the mantelpiece.

"At all events, we can go out through the bedroom," said Dutocq.

"Well, adieu," said the Provençal, opening the concealed door leading from his office to his bedroom.—"Come in, dear Monsieur Thuillier," he cried to the old beau of the Empire.

When he saw him at the door of the office he escorted his two confederates through his bedroom, dressing-room and kitchen, the latter of which had a door opening on the courtyard.

"In six months, you ought to be Céleste's husband, and on the high-road to fame.—You're a lucky fellow; you haven't sat in the dock of the police court twice—as I have! the first time in 1825, when I was prosecuted on account of the alleged implications in some articles I never wrote; and the second time on account of the profits of a stock-company that we just got a sniff of! Come! we must rush this thing, deuce take me! for Dutocq and I are both damnably in need of our twenty-five thousand francs; keep up your pluck, my friend!" he added, giving his hand to Théodore, and mentally making that hand-shake a test of his good faith.

The Provençal gave Cérezet his right hand, and pressed his with much warmth.

"My boy, you may be very sure that, whatever position I may be in, I shall never forget that from which you extricated me to put me on horseback here.—I am your hook, but you have given me the best part of the prey, and I must be viler than a galley-slave who turns spy, not to play a fair game."

As soon as the door was closed Cérezet looked through the keyhole to get a glimpse of Théodore's face; but the Provençal had turned and gone to join Thuillier, so that his suspicious associate was unable to discover the expression of his features.

It was neither disgust nor vexation, but pure delight, that was depicted on Théodore's face when the necessity for dissimulation was removed. He saw that his prospects of success were increasing, and he flattered himself that he could easily get rid of his low confederates, to whom, however, he owed everything. Poverty has unfathomable depths of filth, especially in Paris, and, when a man who has been drowned therein rises to the surface, his body and his clothes are covered with slime. Cérezet, the once opulent friend, the patron of Théodore, was the slime that still clung to the Provençal from that immersion, and the former company-promoter shrewdly guessed that he proposed to give himself a brushing now that he found himself in a sphere where decent garb was a requisite of success.

"Well, my dear Théodore," said Thuillier, "we have hoped to see you every day this week, and

every day our hopes have been disappointed. As this is the Sunday when we have a dinner-party, my wife and sister sent me to insist on your coming."

"I have been so busy," said Théodore, "that I haven't had two minutes to give to anybody, not even to you, whom I look upon as my friend; and I had something to say to you—"

"What! are you really thinking seriously of what you said to me?" cried Thuillier, interrupting him.

"If you hadn't come here so that we could have an understanding, I shouldn't think so much of you as I do," replied La Peyrade, with a smile. "You have been a deputy-chief; therefore you have some little ambition remaining, and it's devilishly right you should have,—come then! between ourselves, when we see a Minard, a gilded jug, going to pay his respects to the king and prancing about at the Tuileries; a Popinot in a fair way to become a minister;—and you, a man broken down by hard work in the departments, a man with thirty years' experience, who has seen six governments, doing nothing but pick flowers.—Think of it!—I tell you frankly, my dear Thuillier, I propose to push you because you'll draw me along after.—This is my plan. We shall soon have to choose a member of the General Council in this arrondissement and you must be the man!—And," he added, emphatically, "you shall be! Some day you'll be Deputy of the chamber for the arrondissement, when a new Chamber is chosen, and that will be before long.—The votes that send you to the Municipal Council

will be for you still when there's a deputy to be elected, trust me for that."—

"But what means do you propose to use?" cried Thuillier, completely fascinated.

"You shall know in good time, but just let me manage the business; it will be a hard job and will take a long time; if you are guilty of any indiscretion as to what is said, or done, or agreed between us, why I'll drop you and be your humble servant!"

"Oh! you can rely on the absolute dumbness of an ex-deputy-chief clerk; I have had secrets before now—"

"Very good! but this is a matter of having secrets from your wife and sister and Monsieur and Madame Colleville."

"Not a muscle of my face shall move," said Thuillier, forcing himself to be calm.

"Good!" rejoined La Peyrade; "I'll test you. In order to be eligible you must pay the rate, and you don't pay it."

"I beg your pardon! I'm all right for election to the General Council. I pay two francs eighty-six centimes."

"True, but to be eligible to the Chamber, the rate is five hundred francs, and there's no time to lose, for we must be prepared to prove eligibility for a year."

"The devil!" exclaimed Thuillier, "to be taxed five hundred francs for something a year ahead—"

"You must pay them by the end of July at latest;

my devotion to your interests carries me so far as to let you into the secret of a little scheme by which you can earn thirty or forty thousand francs a year on a capital of a hundred and fifty thousand at the outside. But your sister has managed the financial affairs of your whole family for a long time; and I am very far from condemning that way of doing business; she has, as they say, more judgment than any one I ever saw: so you must begin by allowing me to win Mademoiselle Brigitte's good-will and affection by suggesting this investment to her, and for this reason. If Mademoiselle Thuillier had no faith in me we should experience some unpleasant sensations; and then, too, is it for you to suggest to your sister to take the deed of the property in your name? It's much better that the suggestion should come from me. However, you shall both make up your own minds about the matter. As for my means of procuring your election to the Municipal Council of the Seine, they are these: Phellion has a fourth of the votes in the quarter at his disposal; he and Laudigeois have lived here thirty years and they're listened to like oracles. I have a friend who can turn over another fourth, and the curé of Saint-Jacques, whose virtuous qualities give him a certain amount of influence, may have some few votes. Dutocq, who, as well as the justice of the peace, is thrown constantly in contact with the people, will help me, especially if I'm not acting on my own account; and lastly, Colleville, as mayor's secretary, represents a fourth of the votes."

"Why, you're quite right, and I'm as good as elected!" cried Thuillier.

"Do you think so?" rejoined La Peyrade, in a tone of indescribable irony; "well, just go and ask your friend Colleville to help you, and you'll see what answer he'll make. In these election matters a triumph is never won by the candidate himself, but by his friends. He must never ask anything himself for himself, but he must arrange it so that he'll be entreated to accept, and must seem to have no ambition."

"La Peyrade!"—cried Thuillier, rising and grasping the young lawyer's hand, "you're a very superior man!"

"Not so superior as you, but I have some little shrewdness of my own," replied the Provençal with a smile.

"But if we succeed how am I to repay you?" asked Thuillier, innocently.

"Ah! there we are.—You'll think me impertinent; but pray consider that I am inspired by a sentiment which should excuse whatever I may say, for it has given me the courage for this undertaking! I am in love and I choose you as my confidant."

"In love with whom?" said Thuillier.

"Your dear little Céleste," replied La Peyrade, "and my love is your guarantee of my devotion to your interests; what wouldn't I do for a *father-in-law!* It's pure selfishness on my part; I am working for myself—"

"Hush!" cried Thuillier.

"Why, my friend," said La Peyrade, laying his hand on Thuillier's shoulder, "if Flavie were not my friend, if I didn't know everything, should I speak to you about it? But wait for her on that subject, and don't broach it to her. Hark ye; I am of the stuff ministers are made of, and I don't want Céleste unless I have earned her: so you will not give her to me until the eve of the election when your name comes out from the urn often enough to make it the name of a deputy for Paris. To be deputy for Paris, you must get ahead of Minard: you must therefore crush Minard, you must retain your means of influence, and to obtain that result, leave Céleste as a hope; we will play them all for her.—Some day Madame Colleville and you and I will be people of consequence. Pray don't think that I am actuated by any material interest; I want Céleste without fortune,—with hopes and nothing more.—To live in your family, to leave my wife in your midst, that is my programme.—You see I have no hidden motive. As for yourself, six months after your election to the General Council you'll have the Cross, and when you are elected to the Chamber, you can procure your own appointment as an officer in the Legion.—When we come to your speeches in the Chamber, why, we'll write them together! It may be necessary for you to appear as the author of a serious work on some half-moral, half-political subject, such as charitable establishments considered from an ethical standpoint, or the reform of the pawn-shops, which are a frightful scandal. Let us

add a little lustre to your name,—that will do good, especially in this district. I have said to you: ‘You shall have the Cross, and become a member of the General Council of the department of the Seine.’ Very good; rely upon me; don’t think of taking me into your family until you have a ribbon in your buttonhole, or until the day after you take your seat in the Chamber. Meanwhile, I will do more for you; I will give you forty thousand francs a year.”

“For either one of the three things alone, you should have our Céleste!”

“Such a pearl among women!” ejaculated La Peyrade, looking at the ceiling; “I am weak enough to pray God for her welfare every day. She’s a charming creature, and she looks like you, too.—What the devil! do I need any arguments to make me love her? Great God! it was Dutocq who told it all to me. Farewell until to-night! I am going to Phellion’s to work for you. Ah! it goes without saying that you are a hundred miles from thinking of me as Céleste’s husband,—otherwise you’d cut off my arms and legs. Not a word about this, even to Flavie! Wait till she speaks to you. Phellion will be ready to use force on you to-night, to bring you over to his plan of proposing you as a candidate.”

“To-night?” said Thuillier.

“To-night,” replied La Peyrade, “unless I fail to find him.”

Thuillier left the room, saying to himself:

"That's a superior man! we always understand each other perfectly, and faith! we might find it hard to pick up a better man than him for Céleste; they'll live with us, as part of the family, and that's a great thing; he's a good fellow, a fine man—"

To minds of the quality of Thuillier's a secondary consideration is as weighty as an argument of the first importance. Théodore's good-fellowship had been charming throughout.

The house toward which Théodore bent his steps a few moments later had been Phellion's *hoc erat in votis* for twenty years; and it was as unmistakably the house for the Phellion family as the frogs on Cérezet's redingote were its necessary ornaments.

It was planted in front of a much larger house and was but one room deep,—about twenty feet; at each end was a sort of pavilion with a single window. Its principal attractions were a garden about sixty yards wide, and longer than the house-front by the whole length of a courtyard upon the street, and a clump of yew trees. Beyond the second pavilion the court-yard was shut off from the street by two gratings with a small two-winged gate between them.

The building was of rough stone covered with plaster painted yellow, and was two stories high; the blinds and shutters on the ground-floor were green. The kitchen was on the ground-floor of the pavilion that opened on the court-yard, and the cook, a stout, rugged girl, protected by two huge dogs, performed the functions of concierge. The façade, in which there were five windows beside the two pavilions, which jutted out a yard or more, was of the Phellion style of architecture. Above the door he had inserted a white marble tablet, upon which

were these words in letters of gold: *Aurea Mediocritas.* Above the semi-dial, drawn in one of the courses of the façade, might be read this wise maxim: *Umbra mea vita, sic!*

The window-sills had been recently replaced by others of red Languedoc marble, picked up at a stone-yard. At the back of the garden was a colored statue which reminded passers-by of a nurse with a child at her breast. Phellion was his own gardener. The ground-floor contained only a salon and a dining-room, separated by the staircase, the landing being the only reception-room. At the end of the salon was a small room used by Phellion as an office.

On the first floor were the apartments of Phellion and his wife, and the young professor; on the second floor the children's rooms and the servants'; for Phellion, in view of his own age and his wife's, had burdened himself with a male domestic about fifteen years old, since his son had become a teacher. At the left as you entered the court-yard were some small outbuildings now used as wood sheds; the last owner had used them for a porter's lodge. The Phelliens were doubtless waiting for the marriage of their son, the professor, before indulging in that luxury.

This property, on which Phellion had long had his eye, cost him eighteen thousand francs in 1831. The house was separated from the court-yard by a balustrade, upon a hewn stone foundation, decorated with roof-tiles laid one upon another, and covered with flagstones. This little wall, which was about

breast-high, was lined with Bengal rose bushes, and in the middle was a wooden gate made in imitation of a grating, opposite the double gate leading to the street.

Those who are familiar with the Impasse des Feuillantines will understand that the Phellion house, standing at right angles to the street, had a full southern exposure and was sheltered on the northern side by the high party-wall against which it stood. The dome of the Pantheon and that of the Val-de-Grâce were like two giants as seen from there, and so diminished the supply of air that one walking in the garden felt as if he were hemmed in between two mountains. Moreover, nothing can be more deathly silent than the Impasse des Feuillantines. Such was the retreat of the great unknown citizen who was now tasting the sweets of repose, after paying his debt to his country by toiling at the Treasury Department, from which he had retired after thirty-six years' service.

In 1832 he led his battalion of the National Guard to the attack on Saint-Merri, but neighbors saw that there were tears in his eyes at the thought of being obliged to fire upon the misguided Frenchmen. The affair was decided before the legion crossed Pont Notre-Dame on the double-quick, coming from the Quai aux Fleurs. This praiseworthy hesitation won for him the esteem of the whole quarter, but he lost by it the decoration of the Legion of Honor; the colonel remarked aloud that one should not stop to deliberate when under arms; a remark made

by Louis-Philippe to the National Guard of Metz. Nevertheless, the bourgeois virtues of Phellion, and the profound respect entertained for him in the quarter kept him in command of the battalion for eight years. He was nearing sixty, and, as the moment approached when he must lay aside the sword and gorget, he hoped that the king would vouchsafe to acknowledge his services by bestowing the Cross upon him.

Truth compels us to state, notwithstanding the stain that this meanness of spirit leaves upon so estimable a character, that Major Phellion walked about on tiptoe at the receptions at the Tuilleries; he put himself forward, watched the Citizen-King from the wings when he sat at dinner, engaged in dark schemes, and yet had not succeeded in obtaining a look from the king of his choice. The worthy man had more than once thought of asking Minard to assist in furthering his secret ambition.

Phellion, the upholder of passive obedience, was an absolute stoic in the matter of doing his duty, and a man of bronze in everything in which his conscience was concerned. To conclude this sketch with a word as to Phellion's physical appearance: at fifty-nine years he had *thickened*, to use a bourgeois expression; his uninteresting, pock-marked face was like a full moon, so that his lips, once unpleasantly thick, now seemed no more than ordinarily so. His weak, spectacled eyes no longer exhibited the simplicity of their faded blue and no longer aroused a smile; his grizzled hair had at last

brought an expression of gravity to the features which once bordered close on idiocy, and readily lent themselves to ridicule. Time, which changes for the worse faces with refined, delicate features, has a beneficial effect upon those which, in their youth, are drawn upon coarse and massive lines, as was the case with Phellion. He employed the leisure of his declining years composing an abridged French history, for Phellion was the author of several works adopted by the University.

When La Peyrade made his appearance the whole family was together: Madame Barniol had come to give her mother the latest news concerning one of her children who was slightly indisposed. The student at the Academy of Roads and Bridges was passing the day at home. They were all sitting, dressed in their Sunday best, before the fire in the salon—finished in wood painted in two shades of gray—upon second-hand wooden arm-chairs, and they all started when they heard the voice of Geneviève, the cook, announcing the individual of whom they were talking that moment in connection with Céleste, whom Félix Phellion loved so dearly that he had been to mass to see her. The learned mathematician had made that effort that very morning, and they were joking him mildly thereupon, wishing that Céleste and her parents would realize the value of the treasure that was offered them.

"Alas! the Thuilliers seem to me to have got a very dangerous man on their hands," said Madame Phellion; "he gave his arm to Madame Colleville

this morning and they went off to the Luxembourg together."

"There's something wrong about that lawyer," cried Félix Phellion; "it wouldn't surprise me to learn that he had committed a crime.—"

"You go too far," said Phellion senior; "he is own cousin to Tartuffe, that immortal figure done in bronze by our virtuous Molière, for virtue and patriotism, my children, were the foundation of Molière's genius."

It was at this juncture that Geneviève entered the room and said:

"Monsieur de la Peyrade would like to speak to Monsieur."

"To me?" cried Monsieur Phellion. "Show him in!" he added with the solemn manner which, when assumed on such trifling provocation, made him appear a little ridiculous, but which had hitherto awed his family, who looked upon him as their king.

Phellion, his two sons, his wife and his daughter rose and received the advocate's general salutation.

"To what do we owe the honor of your visit, Monsieur?" said Phellion, sternly.

"To your eminence in the quarter, my dear Monsieur Phellion, and to matters of public interest," replied Théodore.

"Let us go into my study, then," said Phellion.

"No, no, my dear," said Madame Phellion, a short, dried up little woman, flat as a flounder, whose face never lost the wrinkled sternness with

which she gave instruction in music at young ladies' boarding-schools; "no, no, we will leave you."

An upright Erard piano, between the two windows on the side of the room opposite the fire-place, bore witness to the devotion of the virtuoso to her favorite amusement.

"Must I be so unfortunate as to send you away?" said Théodore, smiling pleasantly at the mother and daughter. "You have a delightful little nook here," he continued, "and you lack nothing now but a pretty daughter-in-law to enable you to pass the rest of your days happily in that *aurea mediocritas*, for which the Latin poet longed, and surrounded by the delights of family life. Your past is eminently deserving of that recompense, for, if I may believe what I hear, dear Monsieur Phellion, you are both a good citizen and a patriarch—"

"Môsieur," said Phellion, much embarrassed, "Môsieur, I have done my duty, nothing more."

At the word *daughter-in-law*, Madame Barniol, who was as like her mother as one drop of water is like another, glanced at Madame Phellion and Félix with an expression which said: "Can we have been mistaken?"

The wish to discuss the incident sent the mother and her three children into the garden, for the weather was quite spring-like, in Paris, at least, in March, 1840.

"Major," said Théodore, when he was alone with the worthy bourgeois, who was always flattered to

be so addressed, "I wanted to talk with you about the election—"

"Ah! yes, we have to choose a member of the Municipal Council," Phellion interrupted.

"Yes, and I have ventured to intrude upon your Sunday privacy in connection with a certain person's candidacy; after all, perhaps we sha'n't have to go outside the family circle."

It was impossible for Phellion to be more Phellion than Théodore was at that moment.

"I won't allow you to say a word more," rejoined the Major, taking advantage of Théodore's pause to observe the effect of what he had said; "my selection is made."

"We must have had the same idea!" cried Théodore; "well-meaning minds may think alike as well as great minds."

"I don't believe in that phenomenon in this instance," replied Phellion. "This district has been represented in the municipal government by the most virtuous of men as he was the greatest of magistrates, to wit, the late Monsieur Popinot, who died a councillor of the royal court. When his place had to be filled, his nephew, who inherited his benevolence, did not live in the quarter; but since then he has bought, and now occupies, the house where his uncle used to live on Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève; he's the physician at the Polytechnic School and at one of our hospitals; he's an honor to the quarter; for these reasons, and to do honor to the uncle's memory in the person of the nephew, a

few of the electors of the quarter and myself have determined to bring forward Dr. Horace Bianchon, member of the Academy of Sciences, as you know, and one of the younger ornaments of the illustrious Parisian school.—A man isn't great in our eyes simply because he is famous, and the late Councillor Popinot, to my way of thinking, was almost a Saint Vincent de Paul."

"A physician isn't an administrator," replied Théodore, "and more than that I have come to ask your vote for a man to whom your dearest interests bid you to sacrifice a mere predilection, which, after all, hasn't any special reference to the public welfare."

"Ah! Monsieur!" cried Phellion, rising and assuming the attitude of Lafon in *Le Glorieux*, "do you think so poorly of me as to believe that personal interest would ever influence my political conscience? As soon as the public good is in question, I am a good citizen, nothing more nor less than that."

Théodore smiled to himself at the thought of the combat about to take place between the father and the citizen.

"Don't make any binding agreements, I beg you," said La Peyrade, "for your dear Félix's happiness is deeply concerned."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Phellion, stopping in the middle of his salon and striking an attitude, with his hand thrust in his waistcoat from right to left,—a gesture copied from the illustrious Odilon Barrot.

"Why, I come to you in behalf of our mutual friend, the worthy and excellent Monsieur Thuillier, whose control over the destiny of pretty Céleste Colleville is well known; and if, as I assume, your son, a young man of whom any family would be proud, and whose merit is incontestable, is paying court to Céleste with a view to a union which would meet all possible requirements, you could do nothing better calculated to earn the everlasting gratitude of the Thuilliers than to put forward your worthy friend for the suffrages of your fellow-citizens. So far as I am personally concerned, although I am a newcomer in the quarter, I might undertake to do it myself, thanks to the influence I have acquired by virtue of some trifling acts of kindness among the poorer classes; but service rendered the poor makes but little impression upon those who are more comfortably fixed, and then any such notoriety would ill befit my modest way of living. I have consecrated my life, Monsieur, to the service of the weak, like the late Councillor Popinot, a sublime man, as you were saying; and, even if I were not in a measure destined for a religious life, which has but little in common with the obligations of the marriage tie, my inclination, my second calling would be to the service of God, to the Church.—I don't make a great noise, as the false philanthropists do; I don't write, but I act, for I am a man devoted heart and soul to the practice of the Christian virtue of Charity. I have thought that I could detect the ambition of our friend Thuillier, and I intended to contribute to the

happiness of two beings who are made for each other, when I suggested to you a method of gaining access to Thuillier's somewhat cold heart."

Phellion was confounded by this admirably delivered speech; he was dazzled and deeply impressed; but he remained the same Phellion, and walked straight up to the advocate, holding out his hand, which La Peyrade took in his.

They exchanged such a handshake as was commonly exchanged, about August, 1830, between the bourgeoisie and the men of the future.

"Môsieur," said the Major, with emotion, "I misjudged you. This that you have done me the honor to confide to me will die here!—" pointing to his heart. "There are few men like you, but those few may well console us for many evils which are inherent in our social organization. Good men are so rare that it is natural for us weak creatures to distrust appearances. You have a friend in me, if you will permit me to do myself the honor of assuming that title.—But you will know me better in time, Môsieur; I should lose my own esteem if I proposed Thuillier. No, my son shall not owe his happiness to an unworthy action on his father's part.—I will not change my candidate, because it would be for my son's interest that I should do so.—That is the path of virtue, Môsieur!"

La Peyrade took out his handkerchief, rubbed his eyes until he succeeded in producing a tear, and said, as he gave his hand to Phellion and turned away his head:

"Your words, Monsieur, tell the story of a sublime struggle between private interests and political interests. Had I come hither only to see this sight, my visit would not be wasted.—What can I say? in your place, I should do as you have done.—You are that greatest of God's works, a good man! a citizen à la Jean-Jacques! With many citizens of his temper, O France! O my country! to what heights would you rise!—Nay, Monsieur, I crave the honor of being your friend."

"What's going on here?" cried Madame Phellion, looking through the window at this moving scene; "your father and that beast of a man are embracing!"

Phellion and the advocate left the salon and joined the family in the garden.

"My dear Félix," said the old gentleman, waving his hand toward La Peyrade, who was saluting Madame Phellion, "you should be very grateful to this excellent young man; he'll do you more good than harm."

The advocate walked back and forth beneath the leafless yews for five minutes, with Madame Barniol and Madame Phellion, and, in view of the grave dilemma brought about by Phellion's political pig-headedness, gave them certain counsel, the result of which was certain to appear during the evening, its more immediate effect being to convert those two ladies into ardent admirers of his talents, his frankness and his many inestimable qualities. The advocate was escorted to the street-door by the whole

family in a body, and every eye was upon him until he turned into Rue Faubourg-Saint-Jacques. As Madame Phellion took her husband's arm to return to the salon, she said:

"How's this, my dear? can it be that such a good father as you are will allow the most splendid match our Félix could make to fall through from excess of delicacy?"

"My love," replied Phellion, "the great men of antiquity, Brutus and the rest, were never fathers when it was a matter of proving themselves good citizens.—The bourgeoisie is held much more strictly to the practice of the loftier virtues than the nobility whose shoes it is called upon to fill. Monsieur de Saint-Hilaire didn't think of the arm he had lost as he stood beside Turenne's dead body.—We have to prove our worthiness; let us prove it at every step of the social ladder. Should I impress these principles upon my family, to disregard them myself when the time comes to apply them?—No, my love, weep to-day, if you choose; you will esteem me for it to-morrow!" he added, seeing that his meagre little better-half had tears in her eyes.

These noble words were uttered on the step of the door above which was written: *Aurea Mediocritas*.

"I should have added: *et digna!*" said Phellion, pointing to the tablet, "but those two words might seem to imply self-praise."

"Father," said Marie-Théodore Phellion, the future builder of roads and bridges, when all the family were once more assembled in the salon, "it

seems to me that there's no dishonor in changing one's mind in the matter of a choice between two men, when the public welfare is not concerned."

"Not concerned, my son!" cried Phellion. "Between ourselves I may say,—and Félix is of the same opinion: Monsieur Thuillier is absolutely without intellectual resources; he knows nothing! Monsieur Horace Bianchon is a capable man; he will obtain a hundred things for our arrondissement, and Thuillier not one! But understand, my son, that to change a proper decision for an improper one, for selfish reasons, is a shameful act which men cannot control, but which God punishes. I am, or I think I am, blameless in the sight of my conscience, and I owe it to you to leave an unspotted reputation behind me. So nothing will make me change my mind."

"Oh! dear father," cried little Madame Barniol, throwing herself on a cushion at Phellion's feet, "don't ride such a high horse! There are plenty of idiots and donkeys in the Municipal Council, and France goes on just the same. Good Thuillier will vote blindly as he's told.—Just remember that Céleste will have five hundred thousand francs, perhaps."

"If she had millions!" said Phellion, "I'd see them—I don't care where. I wouldn't propose Thuillier when I owe it to the memory of the most upright of men to secure the election of Horace Bianchon. Popinot in heaven is looking on and applauding me!" he cried excitedly. "Such reasoning as yours

is what degrades France and brings the bourgeoisie into disrepute."

"Father is right," said Félix, emerging from a fit of deep abstraction, "and he deserves our love and respect as he has done throughout his modest, busy, honorable life. I would not owe my happiness to anything that would fill his soul with remorse, nor to intriguing of any sort; I love Céleste as well as I love my own family, but I place my father's honor above everything and the moment that a doubt springs up in his conscience, why, we'll say no more about it."

Phellion, his eyes filled with tears, rushed to his eldest son and threw his arms about him.

"My son! my son!"—he exclaimed in a choking voice.

"This is all folly," said Madame Phellion in Madame Barniol's ear; "come and help me dress, we must put an end to this. I know your father; he's made up his mind.—To carry out the plan that exemplary and pious young man suggested to us, Théodore, I may need your assistance; so be ready, my son."

At that moment Geneviève appeared and handed Monsieur Phellion a letter.

"An invitation for my wife, Félix and myself to dine at the Thuilliers'," said he.

*

The advocate's superb but astounding scheme had upset the Thuillier family as completely as it did the Phellions; and Jérôme, without confiding anything to his sister, for he was already priding himself on keeping faith with his Mephistopheles, went home in a tremor of excitement.

"My dear little girl," said he to Brigitte—he always appealed to her heart with those words,— "we shall have some big wigs to dinner to-day; I am going to invite the Minards, so take care about dinner; I am writing to invite Monsieur and Madame Phellion; it's a little late in the day, but we needn't stand on ceremony with them.—As for the Minards we must throw a little dust in their eyes, for I need their help."

"Four Minards, three Phellions, four Collevilles and ourselves; that makes thirteen—"

"La Peyrade, fourteen, and it may be well to invite Dutocq; he may be able to help us, too; I'll go up there."

"What are you up to now?" cried his sister; "fifteen at dinner; there's forty francs at least thrown into the gutter!"

"Don't fret about it, little one, and above all things make yourself agreeable to our young friend La Peyrade. There's a friend indeed—you shall

have proof of it!—If you love me, look after him like the apple of your eye."

With that he left Brigitte completely dumfounded.

"Oh! yes, I'll wait for proofs!" she said to herself. "I'm not to be caught with fine words! He's a pleasant fellow enough, but before I take him to my heart I must study him a little more closely."

Having invited Dutocq, Thuillier arrayed himself in his most splendid garb, and sallied forth to the Minard mansion on Rue des Maçons-Sorbonne, to fascinate the coarse Zélie, and gloss over the tardiness of the invitation.

Minard had purchased one of the large, sumptuous edifices built by the old religious orders in the neighborhood of the Sorbonne, and as he ascended a flight of massive stone steps with a wrought-iron railing which proved to what an extent the arts of the second order flourished under Louis XIII., Thuillier's heart was filled with envy of the mayor's abode as well as of his official position.

The vast structure, with a court-yard in front and a garden behind, was distinguished by the refinement and nobility of style characteristic of the reign of Louis XIII., so curiously interposed between the wretched taste of the expiring Renaissance and the grandeur of Louis XIV. at the dawn of his career. This transition is marked by many still-existing monuments. The massive scrolls upon the façades, as at the Sorbonne, and upon the pillars straightened in accordance with the canons of Greek art, begin to appear in the architecture of this period.

A former grocer, a lucky swindler, replaced the reverend manager of an institution called in former times the *Economat*, a dependency of the general agency of the old French clergy, founded by the farsighted genius of Richelieu. Thuillier's name was enough to open the doors of the salon, where, arrayed in red velvet and gold, amid a profusion of magnificent ornaments, sat a poor woman who weighed very heavily upon the hearts of princes and princesses at the popular balls at the Château.

"Isn't that enough to justify *La Caricature?*?" said a would-be maid of honor one day, with a smile to a duchess, who was unable to repress her merriment at the sight of Zélie, loaded with diamonds, red as a poppy squeezed into a gaudy dress, and rolling about like one of the casks of wine in her old shop.

"Will you forgive me, dear madame," said Thuillier, assuming, after numerous contortions, attitude number two of his repertory of 1807, "for leaving this invitation on my desk, thinking it had been sent?—It is for to-day; perhaps I am too late?"

Zélie looked at her husband's face as he came forward to greet Thuillier before she replied:

"We were to go and look at an estate in the country, and dine at some restaurant haphazard, but we will give up our plan the more willingly as I consider it infernally vulgar to go out of Paris on Sunday."

"We'll have a little gymnastics on the piano for the young people, if there are many of us, as I suppose there will be! I have said a word to Phellion;

his wife is intimate with Madame Pron, the successor—*successeur*—”

“Successoress—*successerice*—,” interposed Madame Minard.

“Why, no, it would be *successeresse*,” replied Thuillier, “as we say the *mairesse*—the successeresse of Mademoiselle Lagrave; she is a Barniol, you know.”

“Must I dress?” said Madame Minard.

“Oh! yes, indeed!” cried Thuillier; “if you didn’t I should get a jolly scolding from my sister.—No, it’s a family party! Under the Empire, Madame, people got to know one another at balls.—In those great days a fine dancer was esteemed as highly as a good soldier.—To-day, we’re going too much into the positive—”

“Let’s not talk politics,” said the mayor, with a smile. “The king is a great and a clever man, and I live in constant admiration of my day and of the institutions we have set up for ourselves. Then, too, the king is very well aware what he’s doing by developing our manufactures; he’s engaging in a hand-to-hand struggle with England, and we are doing her more harm during this fruitful peace than by all the wars of the Empire—”

“What a deputy Minard would make!” cried Zélie, naively; “he’s practicing speaking at home, and you’ll help us to get him elected, won’t you, Thuillier?”

“Let’s not talk politics,” retorted Thuillier; “come at five o’clock?”—

"Will that little Vinet be there?" asked Minard; "he came on Céleste's account, of course."

"He may as well put on mourning for her," replied Thuillier; "Brigitte won't hear his name mentioned."

Zélie and Minard exchanged a smile of satisfaction.

"To think that we must associate with such low creatures for our son's sake!" cried Zélie, when Thuillier was on the staircase, whither the mayor escorted him.

"Aha! so you want to be deputy!" said Thuillier to himself as he went down stairs. "Nothing will satisfy these grocers! Great God! what would Napoléon say to see power in the hands of such fellows!—At all events, I am a legislator!—What a rival! What will La Peyrade say?—"

The ambitious deputy-chief went on to invite the whole Laudigeois family for the evening, and thence to Colleville's, to make sure that Céleste would be becomingly dressed. He found Flavie in a very pensive mood; she hesitated about coming, but Thuillier put an end to her indecision.

"My old but still young friend," said he, putting his arm about her waist, for she was alone in her room, "I do not propose to have any secrets from you. There's some talk about something that would be a big thing for me.—I can't say any more, but I can ask you to be particularly agreeable to a certain young man.—"

"Who?"

"Young La Peyrade."

"Why so, Charles?"

"Because he has my future in his hands; he's a man of genius, too. Oh! I know what I'm talking about.—He has this sort of thing!" said Thuillier, going through the motion of a dentist pulling a back tooth. "We must make sure of him, Flavie!—but above all things we mustn't let him see anything, nor let him suspect the secret of his power.—With him I shall be giving for what I am to get."

"Tell me, am I to flirt with him a little?—"

"Not too much, my angel," Thuillier replied with a conceited air.

And he took his leave without noticing the sort of stupefaction which seemed to have seized upon Flavie.

"That young man is a power," said she to herself.—"We shall see."

That was why she wore feathers in her hair and her pretty pink and gray dress, giving a glimpse of her white shoulders through her black mantle, and why she was careful to keep Céleste in a short, high-necked silk dress with broad tucker, and to have her hair dressed in flat braids and parted in the centre.

*

At half-past four Théodore was at his post; he had assumed his silly, almost servile air and his softest voice, and went first of all into the garden with Thuillier.

"My friend, I have no doubt of your triumph, but I feel that I must once more urge you to say absolutely nothing. If you are questioned upon any subject whatever, especially concerning Céleste, reply evasively, so as to leave the questioner in doubt; you must have learned how to do so in the department."

"Agreed!" replied Thuillier. "But are you certain?"

"You'll see the dessert I have prepared for you. Above all things, be modest. Here are the Minards; let me set a bait for them.—Bring them out here and then clear out."

After the customary greetings La Peyrade took pains to keep close to the mayor, and at the first opportunity led him aside.

"Monsieur le Maire," said he, "it can't be that a man of your consequence, politically speaking, comes here to be bored without some object; I have no purpose to pass judgment on your motives, for I haven't the slightest right to do so, and the part I play here is one of non-interference with earthly powers; but I beg you to forgive my presumption,

and to deign to listen to a word of advice that I make bold to give you. If I do you a favor to-day, you are in a position to do me two to-morrow; and so, if it happens that what I have to say helps you at all, I am listening to the promptings of self-interest when I say it. Our friend Thuillier is in despair because he is nobody, and he has taken it into his head to become somebody, a personage of consequence in his arrondissement—”

“Oho!” exclaimed Minard.

“Oh! he doesn’t aim high; he would like to be chosen a member of the Municipal Council. I know that Phellion, realizing the power such a service would give him, proposes to bring our poor friend forward as a candidate. Very good; you may possibly find it essential to the success of your plans to get the start of him in this. Thuillier’s election cannot be otherwise than favorable to you—I mean agreeable; and he’ll hold up his end in the Council; there are smaller men than he there. Moreover, if he is indebted to you for such a lift, he will certainly look at things through your eyes; he will consider you one of the principal lights of the city.”

“My dear fellow, I am greatly obliged to you,” said Minard; “you have rendered me a service for which I can never be grateful enough and which proves—”

“That I do not like those Phelliots,” interposed La Peyrade, availing himself of a momentary hesitation on the part of the mayor, who was afraid of saying something in which the advocate might

detect a flavor of contempt; "I hate people who make such a parade of their honesty, and coin money with noble sentiments."

"You know them well," said Minard; "they're sycophants! That fellow for ten years past has been making a fool of himself over this bit of red ribbon," added the mayor, pointing to his button-hole.

"Be careful!" said the advocate, "his son is in love with Céleste, and he holds the citadel."

"True, but my son has twelve thousand a year of his own."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the advocate with a bound; "why, Mademoiselle Brigitte told me the other day that she was determined that Céleste's husband should have at least as much as that. But before six months are gone you'll find that Thuillier owns real estate worth forty thousand a year."

"Deuce take me! I suspected as much!" rejoined the mayor. "Well, he shall be a member of the Municipal Council."

"Whatever happens, don't mention my name to him," said the poor man's lawyer, turning away to greet Madame Phellion.—"Well, my dear lady, did you succeed?"

"I waited until four o'clock, but the excellent man wouldn't let me finish; he is too busy to accept such a position, and Monsieur Phellion has read the letter in which Doctor Bianchon thanks him for his kind intentions and says that, so far as he is concerned, his candidate is Monsieur Thuillier. He

is exerting his influence in his favor and begs my husband to do the same."

"What did your admirable spouse say to that?"

"'I did my duty,' he said; 'I haven't betrayed my conscience, and now I am all for Thuillier.'"

"Well, everything's all right then," said La Peyrade. "Just forget my visit and take all the credit of the idea to yourself."

With that he walked toward Madame Colleville, assuming a most respectful bearing as he approached her.

"Madame," said he, "be good enough to bring good Papa Colleville here a moment; there's a surprise in store for Thuillier, and he must be in the secret."

While La Peyrade was exerting his artistic talent upon Colleville and indulging in divers very clever jests as he explained the proposed candidacy to him and told him that he ought to support it as a family affair if for no other reason, Flavie was listening, stupefied and with tingling ears, to the following conversation in the salon:

"I'd like to know what Messieurs Colleville and La Peyrade are talking about to make them laugh so much," said Madame Thuillier stupidly, looking through the window.

"They're talking nonsense, as all men do among themselves," replied Mademoiselle Thuillier, who not infrequently attacked the other sex with the natural instinct of old maids.

"He is incapable of it," said Phellion, gravely,

"for Monsieur de la Peyrade is one of the most talented young men I ever met. Every one knows how much I think of Félix: well, I place him on the same level, and I would even be glad to know that my son had a little of Monsieur Théodore's exemplary piety!"

"He is, in truth, a man of merit, and he'll make his mark," observed Minard. "So far as my vote—it would be unseemly to say my patronage—is concerned, it's at his service—"

"He pays more for lamp-oil than for bread," said Dutocq; "I know that."

"His mother, if he's lucky enough to have one, must be very proud of him," said Madame Phellion, sententiously.

"He's a downright treasure to us," said Thuillier, "and if you knew how modest he is! he doesn't make the best of himself."

"The one thing I can answer for," chimed in Dutocq, "is that no young man ever maintained a nobler attitude in poverty, and he triumphed over it; but he has suffered, any one can see that."

"Poor fellow!" cried Zélie; "oh! such things make me ill!"—

"You can safely trust your secrets or your fortune to him," said Thuillier, "and in these days that's the highest praise one can give a man."

"Colleville makes him laugh," cried Dutocq.

At that moment Colleville and La Peyrade were returning from the end of the garden, the best friends imaginable.

"Messieurs!" said Brigitte, "the soup and the king must not be kept waiting; give your hands to the ladies!"

Five minutes after uttering this jest, a reminiscence of her life in the porter's lodge, Brigitte had the satisfaction of seeing her table surrounded by the leading characters of this drama, all of whom, by the way, both great and small, except the repulsive Cérezet, her salon was to contain that evening. It may be that the old bag-maker's portrait would be incomplete if we should omit a description of one of her best dinners. Moreover, the features of the bourgeois cook of 1840 are among the details most essential to the history of manners, and observing housekeepers may glean some information therefrom. A woman does not spend twenty years making bags without looking for a way to fill one now and then. Now there was this peculiarity about Brigitte, she united the economy which is the foundation of fortune with a thorough understanding of what expenses were necessary. Her comparative prodigality, when her brother's needs or Céleste's were to be taken into consideration, was the very antipodes of avarice. Indeed she often complained because she was not a miser. At her last dinner-party she had told how, after struggling with herself for ten minutes and suffering martyrdom, she had finally given ten francs to a poor working-girl of the quarter who had, as she knew, fasted for two days.

"Nature," said she naïvely, "was stronger than common sense."

The soup was almost colorless; for even on an occasion of this sort the cook was enjoined to make a large quantity of soup; and as the beef was to furnish food for the family on the two following days, the less strength it furnished to the soup the more nourishing power it retained. The beef, cooked but little, was always taken away when Brigitte remarked, as her brother plunged the knife into it:

"I think it's rather tough; anyway let it go, Thuillier, no one will eat it, and we have something else."

The soup was, on this occasion, flanked by four dishes perched upon old worn silver chafing-dishes. At this dinner, called the dinner of the candidacy, the first course consisted of two ducks with olives opposite a large meat-pie with quenelles, and an eel à la tartare opposite a fricandeau of veal with chicory. The second course had for a centre-piece a lordly goose stuffed with chestnuts, on one side of which was a lettuce salad garnished with rounds of beetroot, on the other side jars of cream, and at the ends turnips au sucre facing a timbale of macaroni. This typical dinner of the concierge who caters for weddings and birthday parties cost twenty francs at most, and the remains kept the whole household two days. But Brigitte would say:

"Bless me! when one entertains, the money flies!
—it's frightful!"

The table was lighted by two horrible four-branched candelabra of silvered copper, in which

were burning the economical candles known by the name of the *Aurora*. The linen was of dazzling whiteness; the old-fashioned silver-plate was part of the paternal inheritance, purchased during the Revolution by Père Thuillier, and used by him in the restaurant kept by him under another name in his lodge; these restaurants were abolished in 1816 in all the departments. Thus the good cheer was in harmony with the dining-room, with the house itself, and with the Thuilliers, who were not likely to rise above this level. The Minards, the Collevilles, and La Peyrade exchanged glances which denoted that the same sarcastic thought was in all their minds. They alone knew what luxury really was, and the Minards scarcely concealed their motive in accepting an invitation to such a repast. La Peyrade, seated beside Flavie, whispered in her ear:

"Confess that they are sadly in need of being taught how to live, and that you and Colleville are feeding on what is known as *mad cow*,* an old acquaintance of mine! But those Minards—what ghastly cupidity! Your daughter would be forever lost to you; these parvenus have all the vices of the great nobles of the old days without their refinement. Their son, who has twelve thousand a year, can find women enough in the Potasse family without their dragging the rake of their speculation through this

* To feed on mad cow (*manger de la vache enragée*) is an idiomatic expression meaning to be reduced to the point of eating the meat of a cow that had gone mad, that is to say, to be reduced to extreme destitution.

house. What fun it is to play on such fellows as one plays on a tuba or a clarionet!"

Flavie listened with a smile on her face, and did not take her foot away when Théodore rested his lightly upon it.

"That's just to tell you what's going on," said he; "we'll communicate by the pedal; you must know me by heart since this morning, and I'm not the man to indulge in such trifling—."

Flavie was not mistaken as to Théodore's superiority; his keen, off-hand manner dazzled her, and the clever prestidigitator had offered battle in such a way as to put her, so to speak, between yes and no; she must either accept or reject him absolutely; and, as his whole conduct was carefully planned beforehand, he watched with a mild eye, but with mental shrewdness, the results of his fascination.

While they were removing the dishes after the second course, Minard, fearing that Phellion might anticipate him, addressed Thuillier with a solemn face.

"My dear Thuillier," said he, "my reason for accepting your invitation to dinner was that there is an important communication to be made to you, a communication so honorable to you it should be made in the presence of all your guests."

Thuillier turned pale.

"You have obtained the Cross for me?—" he cried, receiving a glance from Théodore, and desirous to show him that he did not lack finesse.

"You will have it some day," the mayor replied; "but I refer to something better than that. The Cross is a mere favor due to a minister's good-will, while in this case it's a matter of an election in which the assent of all your fellow-citizens is concerned. In a word, a sufficient number of the electors of your arrondissement are looking to you, and desire to honor you with their confidence by entrusting to you the representation of this arrondissement in the Municipal Council of Paris, which is, as everyone knows, the General Council of the Seine—"

"Bravo!" shouted Dutocq.

Phellion rose.

"Monsieur le Maire has anticipated me," he said, in a voice trembling with emotion, "but it is so flattering to our friend to be solicited by all good citizens at one and the same time and to hear the voice of the public speaking from all parts of the capital, that I cannot complain of having to take the second place, and besides, it is for those in high office to take the initiative!—" here he bowed respectfully to Minard—"Yes, Monsieur Thuillier, several electors think of bestowing their votes upon you, in that part of the district where I have set up my humble household gods, and you have this special advantage, that your name was suggested to them by an illustrious man,"—Sensation.—"by a man, in whose person we are glad to honor one of the most estimable inhabitants of the arrondissement, who was twenty years its father—I refer to the late Monsieur Popinot, in his lifetime councillor

at the royal court and our mouthpiece in the Municipal Council. But his nephew, Doctor Bianchon, one of those men who reflect glory upon us, has declined, on account of his engrossing occupations, the responsibility which might have been thrust upon him; while thanking us for our homage, he suggests—mark what I say—he suggests Monsieur le Maire's candidate as a proper person to be voted for, as being, in his opinion, the best fitted, by reason of his long experience in the office he so lately quitted, to perform the duties of a municipal magistrate!"

Phellion resumed his seat amid murmurs of approbation.

"Thuillier, you can count on your old friend," said Colleville.

At that moment the attention of all the guests was attracted to the affecting spectacle presented by old Brigitte and Madame Thuillier. The tears were slowly following one another down Brigitte's cheeks, which were as white as if she were on the point of fainting,—tears of profound joy they were,—while Madame Thuillier sat with fixed eyes, as though thunderstruck. Suddenly the old maid darted into the kitchen, crying to Joséphine:

"Come to the cellar with me, my girl!—we must have some of the wine from behind the wood-pile!"

"My friends," said Thuillier, with deep emotion, "this is the happiest day of my life, happier even than the day of my election will be, if I can make up

my mind to submit myself to the suffrages of my fellow-citizens (Hear! hear!), for I feel that I am pretty well worn out by thirty years of public service, and you will agree that an honorable man should consult his strength and his capabilities before assuming the duties of a municipal magistrate,—”

“I expected no less from you, Môsieur Thuillier!” cried Phellion. “I beg pardon! this is the first time in my life that I ever interrupted anybody, and a former superior, too; but there are circumstances—”

“Accept! accept!” cried Zélie; “God bless my soul! we need men like you to govern us.”

“Make up your mind, my chief!” said Dutocq; “long live the future municipal councillor!—But we haven’t anything to drink—”

“Well, it’s settled that you are our candidate?” said Minard.

“You expect a good deal of me,” replied Thuillier.

“Nonsense!” cried Colleville; “a man who’s slaved thirty years in the Treasury Department will be a treasure for the city!”

“You’re much too modest!” said Minard the younger; “your capacity is well known to us; it has become proverbial in the department—”

“It will be your own fault!—” cried Thuillier.

“The king will be well pleased with our selection, I can promise you that,” said Minard, puffing out his chest.

"Messieurs," said La Peyrade, "will you permit a newcomer in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques to make one observation not altogether unimportant?"

The universal appreciation of the young advocate's abilities caused his remarks to be awaited in absolute silence.

"The influence of his Honor, the mayor of the neighboring arrondissement, which is very great in our own, where he is so pleasantly remembered; the influence of Monsieur Phellion, the oracle—I will tell the truth," he added, as Phellion raised his hand, "the oracle of his battalion; the no less potent influence which Monsieur Colleville owes to his outspokenness and his urbanity; the equally efficacious influence of our friend, the clerk to the justice of the peace, and the slight efforts I am able to make in my limited sphere of activity, are pledges of success; but they are not success!—In order to obtain a swift and complete triumph, we ought all to agree to maintain the strictest secrecy as to the manifestation that has taken place here.—We should arouse, without knowing it or intending to do it, envy and the lesser passions which would eventually throw obstacles in our way. The political force of the new social organization, its very foundations and the guaranty of its existence lie in a certain division of power with the middle-class, the real living force of modern society, the abode of morality, right feeling and intelligent toil; but we can not blind our eyes to the fact that the extension of the principle of election to almost all offices has caused

the incitements of ambition and the rage to be something, excuse the expression, to penetrate to social depths which should be beyond their reach. Some people see in this state of things an advantage, others an evil; it isn't for me to decide the question in presence of those to whose superior wisdom I gladly bow; I am content if I have so stated it as to make clear the risk our friend's standard may have to run. For instance, our late honorable representative in the Municipal Council has been dead hardly a week, and already the arrondissement is aroused by the ambition of second-rate men. They are determined to put themselves on exhibition at any price. The order for a new election may not take effect for a month. Think how many intrigues will be set on foot in that time!—Let us not, I beg, set up our friend Thuillier for a target for his rivals! let us not abandon him to public discussion, that modern harpy which is simply the speaking-trumpet of slander and envy, the pretext grasped by one's enemies to debase everything great, defame everything worthy of respect, dishonor everything sacred;—let us do as a third part of the Chamber does—hold our tongues and vote."

"He speaks well," said Phellion to his neighbor Dutocq.

"And what a lot he knows!—"

Minard's son had turned green and yellow with envy.

"That's well said and true!" cried Minard.

"Unanimously agreed," said Colleville; "Messieurs, we are honorable men, and it's enough for us to understand one another on this matter."

"He who wishes to accomplish a thing must adopt the proper means," said Phellion, emphatically.

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At this juncture Mademoiselle Thuillier appeared followed by her two servants; she had the key of the cellar thrust in her girdle, and three bottles of champagne, three of old Hermitage, and one of Malaga were placed on the table; but she carried in her own hands with something like veneration a small bottle, of slender, delicate shape, which she placed in front of herself. Amid the hilarity caused by this abundance of good things which the old maid was induced by her gratitude to produce, and which, in her excitement, she distributed with a profusion which amounted to condemnation of her stingy fortnightly hospitality, numerous varieties of dessert arrived: heaps of raisins, figs, almonds and filberts, pyramids of oranges, sweetmeats and preserved fruits produced from the inmost depths of her cupboards, and which would never have graced her cloth except for this happy occurrence.

“Céleste, Joséphine will bring you a bottle of eau-de-vie my father had in 1802; make an orange salad with it!” she cried to her sister-in-law.—“Monsieur Phellion, pour the champagne; that bottle is for you three.—Monsieur Dutocq, take this!—Monsieur Colleville, you know how to make corks fly!—”

The two maids distributed champagne glasses, claret glasses and liqueur glasses, for Joséphine had produced three bottles of claret.

"Bottled in the year of the comet!" cried Thuillier. "Messieurs, you have driven my sister out of her head."

"And this evening we'll have punch and cake," said she. "I have sent to the druggist's for some tea. Mon Dieu! if I'd known there was to be an election," she cried, looking at her sister-in-law, "I'd have had the turkey—"

This remark was greeted with general laughter.

"Oh! but we had a goose," said Minard junior laughing.

"The world's coming to an end!" cried Madame Thuillier, as iced chestnuts and meringues were served.

Mademoiselle Thuillier's face was on fire; she was superb; never did sister love take so furious an expression.

"It's very touching to anyone who knows her!" cried Madame Colleville.

The glasses were full, the guests were looking at one another as if awaiting a toast, and La Peyrade said:

"Messieurs, let us drink to something sublime!—"

Everybody was amazed.

"To Mademoiselle Brigitte!—"

They rose and jingled their glasses, and cried: "Vive Mademoiselle Thuillier!" in the enthusiasm produced by real emotion.

"Messieurs," said Phellion, reading from a paper on which some lines were written in pencil, "to

hard work and its glorious results, in the person of our former comrade, now one of the mayors of Paris, Monsieur Minard, and his wife!"

After five minutes of general conversation, Thuillier rose.

"Messieurs," said he, "to the king and royal family!—I say no more, for the toast says all that is necessary."

"To my brother's election!" said Mademoiselle Thuillier.

"I am going to make you laugh," La Peyrade whispered to Flavie; and he rose to his feet.

"To the ladies! to the fascinating creatures to whom we owe so much pleasure, to say nothing of our mothers, our sisters and our wives!—"

This toast aroused general mirth, and Colleville, who was beginning to be very merry, shouted:

"Villain! you took the words out of my mouth!"

The mayor rose and profound silence reigned.

"Messieurs, to our institutions! to them we owe the strength and grandeur of dynastic France!"

The bottles disappeared amid a chorus of admiration of the amazing good-fellowship and subtlety of the liquids.

"Mamma, may I propose a toast?" said Céleste Colleville, timidly.

The poor girl had noticed the bewildered face of her godmother, utterly unnoticed, though she was the mistress of the house, and almost reminding one of a dog uncertain what master to obey, as she looked from her terrible sister-in-law's face to Thuillier's,

watching their expressions and entirely oblivious of herself; but the joy depicted upon those docile features, accustomed as they were to express nothing, to repress all evidence of thought or feeling, produced the effect of a pale sun shining through a winter mist: it cast a dim, regretful light upon that flabby, faded flesh. The gauze cap trimmed with sombre flowers, the disheveled hair, the dun-colored dress whose only ornament was a heavy gold chain—everything about her, even to her face, increased the affection felt for her by young Céleste, who, alone in all the world, really knew the worth of this tongue-tied creature, who knew everything that was going on about her, to whom everything brought suffering, and who sought consolation in her and in God.

"Let the dear child propose her little toast," said La Peyrade to Madame Colleville.

"Go on, my dear," cried Colleville; "there's some Hermitage left, and it's hoary with age!"

"To my dear godmother!" said the girl, lowering her glass respectfully before Madame Thuillier, and handing it to her.

The poor terrified woman looked first at her sister, then at her husband, through a veil of tears; but her position in the family was so well known, and there was something so touching in the homage paid by innocence to weakness, that the emotion was general; all the men rose and bowed to Madame Thuillier.

"Ah! Céleste, I wish I had a kingdom to lay at your feet!" said Félix Phellion.

Honest Phellion wiped away a tear, and even Dutocq was moved.

"What a dear, lovely child!" said Mademoiselle Thuillier, leaving her seat to go and kiss her sister-in-law.

"My turn!" said Colleville, assuming an athletic pose. "Listen to me! To friendship!—Empty your glasses! fill your glasses!—Good! To the fine arts! the flower of social life.—Empty your glasses! fill your glasses!—To a feast like this on the day after election!"

"What's that little bottle?—" Dutocq inquired of Mademoiselle Thuillier.

"It's one of my three bottles of Madame Amphoux's liqueur," she replied; "the second is for Céleste's wedding-day, and the third for the day her first child is baptized."

"My sister has almost lost her head," said Thuillier to Colleville.

The dinner was brought to an end by a toast proposed by Thuillier, to whom it was suggested by Théodore when the Malaga shone in the liqueur glasses like so many rubies.

"Colleville, Messieurs, drank to *friendship*; I drink to *my friends*, in this generous wine."

A burst of warm applause greeted this bit of sentiment; but, as Dutocq whispered to Théodore:

"It's a crime to furnish such Malaga as this to gullets of the lowest order.—"

"Ah! if we could only imitate this, my dear friend," cried the mayoress, making her glass ring

by the way she sucked the Spanish wine, "what a fortune we would make!—"

Zélie had reached her highest point of incandescence; she was a terrifying object.

"But our fortune is made!" rejoined Minard.

"Do you agree with me, sister," said Brigitte to Madame Thuillier, "that we'd better have our coffee in the salon?—"

Madame Thuillier, obeying the implied command, or pretending to act as hostess, rose to her feet.

"Ah! you're a wonderful magician," said Flavie Colleville, as she took La Peyrade's arm to go from the dining-room to the salon.

"Yet I have no wish to try my magic art on anyone but you," he replied; "and I am simply taking my revenge, believe me; you are more bewitching to-day than ever!"

"Fancy Thuillier imagining himself a politician!" said she, seeking to avoid the combat.

"But, my dear, one-half of the absurdities that happen in society are the result of such conspiracies as this; the man isn't so much to be blamed in this sort of thing as people think. In how many families do you not see the husband and children and friends of the family persuading a foolish mother that she is bright and intellectual, a mother of fifty that she is young and lovely? Such things are inexpressibly comical to those who are not interested. One man owes his sickening, fatuous conceit to the idolatry of a mistress, and his persistence in making bad rhymes to people who are paid to

make him think he is a great man. Every family has its great man, and the result is general darkness, as in the Chamber, with all the greatest lights of France.—Meanwhile, the people who know something are laughing in their sleeves, that's all. You have all the wit and beauty of this little bourgeois circle; that's why I dedicated my heart to you; but my second thought was to take you away from it all, for I love you sincerely; and more as a friend than a lover, although a good deal of love has found its way in," he added, pressing her to his heart under cover of the window-recess to which he had led her.

"Madame Phellion will officiate at the piano," said Colleville; "everything must dance to-day: the bottles, Brigitte's twenty-sou pieces, and our little girls! I'll go and get my clarionet."

He handed his empty coffee cup to his wife, smiling to see her on such harmonious terms with Théodore.

"Pray, what have you done to my husband?" inquired Flavie of her charmer.

"Must we tell each other all our secrets?"

"Ah! you don't love me, then?" she retorted, glancing at him with the sly coquetry of a woman whose mind is almost made up.

"Oh! as you tell me all yours," he rejoined, with a renewed outburst of the characteristic Provençal gaiety, which is so charming and apparently so spontaneous, "I would not have a single thought concealed from you in my heart.—"

He led her back to the same recess, and said with a smile:

"Colleville, poor man, has recognized in me the true artist oppressed by all these bourgeois, holding his peace before them because he sees that he is misunderstood, misjudged, persecuted; but he has felt the heat of the sacred flame that consumes me. Yes," he continued, with an air of deep conviction, "I am an artist in speech after the style of Berryer; I could make jurors weep by weeping myself, for I am as nervous as a woman. And then, that man, who has a holy horror of this whole bourgeois connection, joked with me about it; we began with laughter, and when we came to be serious he found that I am as strong as he. I told him of the plan we had devised to make something of Thuillier, and I showed him how much benefit it might be to him to have a political automaton to do his bidding: 'If it were only to become Monsieur *de* Colleville,' I said, 'and to place your wife where I would like to see her; suppose you could get a good berth as receiver-general, where you would have to be a deputy? for, in order to take the position you deserve, it will be enough for you to go and live a year or two in some little town in the Upper or Lower Alps, where everybody will be attached to you, and your wife will fascinate everybody. And all this,' I added, 'you cannot miss, especially if you give your dear Céleste to a man able to exert influence in the Chamber.' Common-sense, translated into pleasantry, has the virtue of making a much

deeper impression than it could do unaided upon certain temperaments: so Colleville and I are the best friends in the world. Didn't he say to me at the table: 'Villain, you took the words out of my mouth!' Before the evening is over we shall be calling each other thee and thou.—Then a nice little party,—one of the kind at which artists accustomed to home diet always compromise themselves, and to which I'll find a way to induce him to go,—will make us as warm friends as he and Thuillier; more so, perhaps, for I have told him that Thuillier was bursting with jealousy of his rosette.—There, my dear love, you see what a heartfelt sentiment gives a man the courage to do! Wasn't it necessary that Colleville should adopt me, so that I might call upon you with his consent?—But then you could make me lick a leper's sores, or swallow live frogs, or seduce Brigitte; yes, I would run that great pole through my heart, if it were necessary to use it as a crutch to drag myself to your feet!"

"This morning," said she, "you frightened me—"

"And this evening you are reassured?—Have no fear," he said; "no harm will ever come to you from me."

"Ah! you are a most extraordinary man, I confess—"

"Why, no; my most trivial, as well as my greatest efforts are but the reflection of the fire you have kindled, and I desire to be your son-in-law so that we need never part.—My wife, great heavens! can never be anything more than a

machine to produce children; but the sublime being in my eyes, my divinity, will be yourself," he whispered.

"You are Satan himself!" she exclaimed, with a shudder.

"No, I am something of a poet, like all the people of my province. Come! be my Joséphine! I will come to you to-morrow at two; I have a most eager desire to see where you sleep, the furniture you use, the color of the hangings, the arrangement of the things amid which your life is passed—to admire the pearl in its shell!"

With that he shrewdly walked away, preferring not to listen to her reply.

Flavie, in all whose experience love had never spoken the impassioned language of romance, remained where he left her, bewildered but happy, with palpitating heart, saying to herself that it was very difficult not to yield to such an influence.

For the first time Théodore had arrayed himself in new breeches, gray silk stockings and pumps, a black silk waistcoat and black satin cravat, in whose folds glistened a pretty, tasteful pin. He wore a new coat of the latest cut, and yellow gloves that stood out against his white wristbands; he was the only man with refined manners and dignified bearing among the guests who slowly filled the salon.

Madame Pron, née Barniol, arrived with two of her boarding-school pupils, each about seventeen years old, who had been entrusted to her motherly care by families living at Bourbon and Martinique.

Monsieur Pron, professor of rhetoric in a college managed by priests, was a man of the Phellion type; but instead of being always in evidence, establishing his claim to consideration by pompous phrases and argumentation, and constantly posing as an exemplar, he was dull and sententious. Monsieur and Madame Pron, the bright particular stars of the Phellion salon, received on Mondays; they were very closely allied to the Phelliots through the Barniols. Although a dignified professor, little Pron was addicted to dancing. The great celebrity of the Lagrave institution, to which Monsieur and Madame Phellion had been attached for twenty years, had attained even greater proportions under the management of Mademoiselle Barniol, the most proficient and oldest in service of the sub-mistresses. Monsieur Pron was a very influential personage in that portion of the quarter bounded by the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, the Luxembourg, and Rue de Sèvres. So it was that Phellion, as soon as he saw his friend, took him by the arm without formality, and led him aside to take him into the secret of the Thuillier conspiracy, and after talking together ten minutes they both went in search of Thuillier; thereupon the window-recess opposite that where Flavie still stood absorbed in her reflections was treated without doubt to a trio worthy, in its way, to be ranked beside that of the three Swiss in *Wilhelm Tell*.

"Do you see the upright and virtuous Phellion intriguing?" Théodore said to Flavie. "Give the

upright man an excuse, and he'll wallow about very comfortably in the filthiest kind of corruption; at all events he's hooked little Pron, and Pron's covering his footsteps, solely in the interest of Félix Phellion, who has your little Céleste in hand at this moment.—Pray go and separate them; they've been together ten minutes and young Minard is prowling about them like an angry bull-dog."

Félix, still under the spell of the keen emotion caused by Céleste's kind act wherein her heart spoke so plainly, when everybody else except Madame Thuillier had quite forgotten it, had recourse to one of those ingenious subterfuges, which are the honest knavery of true love ; but he was not accustomed to the business, for mathematics furnished all his distraction. He went up to Madame Thuillier, imagining shrewdly that Madame Thuillier would attract Céleste. This deep scheme, as it would have been had it been due to aught but a profound passion, was the more successful, in that Minard, the advocate, who saw nothing in Céleste but a good-sized marriage-portion, had no such happy inspiration, and was drinking his coffee and talking politics with Laudigeois, Monsieur Barniol and Dutocq, by command of his father, who was thinking of the new legislature to be chosen in 1842.

"Who would not be fond of Céleste?" said Félix to Madame Thuillier.

"Poor dear child, she is the only person on earth who cares for me," replied the outcast, keeping back her tears.

"Eh? Madame, there are two of us who love you," rejoined this innocent Mathieu Laensberg, with a smile.

"What are you saying?" asked Céleste of her godmother, as she approached them.

"My child," said the pious creature, drawing her goddaughter to her side and kissing her on the brow, "he says that you and he make two who love me."

"Don't be offended at my presumption, Mademoiselle," said the future candidate for the Academy of Sciences, in a low voice, "but let me do what I can to show my sincerity! That's the way I was made, you see; injustice shocks me deeply. Ah! how great was the wisdom of the Savior of mankind in promising future blessedness to the kind of heart, to the lambs that are sacrificed!—A man who had simply loved you before, Céleste, would adore you after your sublime outburst at the table! But innocence alone can console the martyr! You are a tender-hearted girl, and you will be one of the women who are at once the glory and the happiness of a family. A lucky man will he be who wins your heart!"

"Dear godmother, through whose eyes does Monsieur Félix see me, pray?"

"He appreciates you, my little angel, and I will pray God for you—"

"If you only knew how happy I am that my father is able to be of service to Monsieur Thuillier,—and how glad I would be to be useful to your brother!—"

"In short," said Céleste, "you love the whole family?"

"Well, yes," replied Félix.

True love always wraps itself in the mysteries of modesty, even in its manner of expression, for it proves itself by itself; it feels not the need, as false love does, of kindling a conflagration, and a disinterested observer, who could have insinuated himself into the Thuillier salon, might have found material for a book in a comparison of the two scenes,—the extensive and complicated preparation of Théodore, and Félix's simplicity; one represented society, the other nature; the true and the false were brought face to face.

In truth, as she watched her daughter, blissfully pouring forth her heart through every pore of her face, and fair as a young girl plucking the first flowers of an indirect declaration, Flavie felt a thrill of jealousy at her heart; she went to Céleste and whispered in her ear:

"You aren't behaving very well, my child; everybody is looking at you, and you are compromising yourself by talking so long with Monsieur Félix, without first finding out whether it's agreeable to us."

"But, mamma, my godmother is here."

"Oh! I beg your pardon! my dear friend," said Madame Colleville, "I didn't see you—"

"You do as everybody else does," retorted the St. John Chrysostom.

This rebuke annoyed Madame Colleville, who received it like a barbed arrow; she glanced haughtily at Félix, and said to Céleste: "Come and sit here,

my child," as she seated herself beside Madame Thuillier, and pointed to a chair beside her own.

"I will kill myself with work," said Félix there-upon to Madame Thuillier, "or I'll become a member of the Academy of Sciences, and I will make some great discovery and win her hand by making my name glorious."

"Ah!" said the poor woman to herself, "I ought to have married some kind, quiet student like him! —I should have developed slowly under cover of a retired life.—Thou didst will otherwise, O my God! but I pray Thee to join the hands of these two children and shelter them! they are made for each other."

She sat pensively by, listening to the infernal hubbub her sister was making, for the latter was a veritable draught-horse, and was now at work assisting her two servants to clear the table and remove everything from the dining-room, to give the dancers a clear field; and she was shouting like the captain of a frigate on his quarter-deck, preparing to take his ship into action: "Have you got any more currant syrup? Go and buy some orgeat!"—or: "There aren't many glasses and only a little weak wine and water; go and get the six bottles of *vin ordinaire* I have just brought up. Look out that Coffinet, the porter, doesn't take any!—Caroline, my girl, stay by the sideboard.—You shall have a slice of ham in case they're still dancing at one o'clock. No chattering! have an eye on everything. Pass me the broom; put oil in the lamps

and look out for accidents. Arrange what's left of the dessert so as to make the sideboard look nice.— See if my sister will come and help us! I don't know what the slow-coach is thinking about. My God! how slow she is! Bah! take away the chairs, and they'll have more room."

The salon was filled with Barniols, Collevilles, Laudigeois, Phellions, and all those who were drawn thither by the report that there was to be a dance at the Thuilliers', which report was circulated in the Luxembourg gardens between two and four o'clock, when the bourgeoisie of the quarter was taking its promenade.

"Are you ready, Brigitte?" asked Colleville, rushing into the dining-room; "it's nine o'clock, and they're packed as close as herrings in your salon. Cardot, his wife and son and daughter and son-in-law that is to be, have just come, with the young deputy king's attorney, Vinet, and the Faubourg Saint-Antoine is marching in at this moment. Shall we move the piano in here from the salon, eh?"

He gave the signal on his clarionet, his spirited flourish thereon being welcomed with a shout in the salon.

It is a thankless task to describe a ball of this sort. The dresses, the faces, the conversation, everything was in harmony with a single detail which should be sufficient for the least vivid imagination; for in every such function the nature and color of any single fact serve to stamp the whole affair. Ordinary glasses filled with pure wine,

wine and water and eau sucrée, were passed about on shabby, discolored plates. The trays on which were the glasses of orgeat and syrup appeared only at long intervals. There were five card-tables and twenty-five players! eighteen couples dancing! At one in the morning, Madame Thuillier, Mademoiselle Brigitte, Madame Phellion, to say nothing of Phellion père, were enticed into the wild evolutions of a contra-dance vulgarly called *La Boulangère*, in which Dutocq figured with his head veiled after the manner of the Kabyles! The servants, who were waiting for their masters with those of the household, formed an audience, and as the interminable dance lasted a full hour, they insisted upon carrying Brigitte in triumph when she announced supper; but she divined the necessity of concealing a dozen bottles of old Burgundy. They all enjoyed themselves so thoroughly, staid matrons as well as young girls, that Thuillier made bold to say:

“Well, we hardly expected this morning that we should have such a celebration as this to-day!—”

“Nothing is ever more pleasant than these parties gotten up on the spur of the moment,” said Cardot, the notary. “Don’t talk to me about the stiff, formal affairs that everyone goes to well-groomed!”

This idea is a sort of axiom in bourgeois circles.

“Nonsense!” said Madame Minard; “for my own part, I’m very fond of papa, and I’m very fond of mamma, but—”

"We don't say that for you, Madame, beneath whose roof pleasure has chosen to make her home," said Dutocq.

When *La Boulangère* was at an end, Théodore dragged Dutocq away from the sideboard, where he was taking a slice of tongue.

"Let's go home," said he, "for we must be at Céritet's early in the morning to find out all there is to know about the affair we all have in mind; it's not so easy as Céritet thinks."

"Why not?" queried Dutocq, eating his piece of tongue in the salon.

"Why, don't you know the laws?—"

"I know enough of them to be quite well aware of the risk of the thing. If the notary wants the house, and we whistle it away from him, there's a way for him to take it from us again, and he may put himself in the position of a registered creditor. According to the law now in force concerning mortgages, when a house is sold at the request of a creditor, if the price obtained at the sale isn't enough to pay all the debts, the creditors have a right to bid it in; and the notary, having been caught once, will think better of it."

"Very good," said La Peyrade; "that seems to me to deserve some attention."

"All right!" said the clerk; "we'll go and see Céritet."

These words: "We'll go and see Céritet," were overheard by the advocate Minard, who was close on the heels of the two confederates; but they meant

nothing to him. The two men were so far removed from his path and his plans that he listened to them without hearing.

"This has been one of the happiest days in our whole life," said Brigitte, when she was at last alone with her brother at half-past two in the morning, in the deserted salon; "what a glorious thing it is to be thus selected by one's fellow-citizens!"

"Don't make any mistake, Brigitte; we owe all this to one man, my child—"

"Who is that?"

"Our friend La Peyrade."

■

Not until the second day after, Tuesday, did Dutocq and Théodore call upon Cérizet, the clerk having bethought himself that that worthy was accustomed to take a vacation on Sunday and Monday, availing himself of the scarcity of customers at the justice's court on those two days, which were devoted by the common people to debauchery. The house toward which they bent their steps is one of the salient features of the physiognomy of Faubourg Saint-Jacques, and it is as important to be studied here as Thuillier's or Phellion's. No one knows—true, no commission has yet been appointed to investigate this phenomenon—no one knows how or why the various quarters are becoming degraded and debased, morally as well as physically; how the former abiding-places of the court and the Church, the Luxembourg and the Latin Quarter, have become what they are to-day, notwithstanding one of the most beautiful palaces in the world, to say nothing of the soaring dome of Sainte-Geneviève, and that of Mansard at Val-de-Grâce, and the beauties of the Jardin des Plantes. One wonders why all the refinements of life are vanishing; how it is that the houses of the Vauquers, the Phelliens and the Thuilliers, and the boarding-schools, are multiplying to such an extent on the sites of so many noble edifices devoted to good works, and why

squalor and vulgar industry and poverty have pitched their tents upon a mountain, instead of parading themselves far away from the noble old city? No sooner was the angel dead who formerly hovered over the quarter, with protecting wings outspread, than petty usury hastened to the spot. A Cérizet succeeded Councillor Popinot; and it is a curious fact, and one well worth studying, that the effect produced, socially speaking, was very slight. Popinot loaned without interest and expected to lose; Cérizet lost nothing, and compelled the poor devils to work hard and be more prudent. The poor adored Popinot, but they had no feeling of hatred for Cérizet. Here we see at work the lowest wheels of the Parisian financial machine. At the top are the Maison Nucingen, the Kellers, the Du Tillets, the Mongenods; a little lower, the Palmas, the Gigonnetts, the Gobsecks; lower still, the Samanons, the Chaboisseaus, the Barbets; and finally, below the Mont-de-Pieté, that king of usurers, who stretches his nets at street corners in order to take every poor man by the throat, and let not one escape,—below the Mont-de-Pieté come the Cérizets!

The frogged overcoat should have given you a glimpse already of the hovel that sheltered this stock-company swindler, and fugitive from the sixth chamber.

It was a house eaten up with saltpetre; the walls were reeking with dampness and were covered, enameled as it were, with great blotches of mildew. It was located at the corner of Rue des Postes

and Rue des Poules, and the ground-floor was occupied in part by a wine-shop of the lowest class, painted a brilliant red on the outside, and adorned with red calico curtains; the counter was covered with lead and protected with formidable iron bars.

Above the door leading into a filthy hall swung a dirty lantern, whereon were the words: "Lodging for the night." The walls were dotted with iron supports which bore witness to the instability of their construction. The wine merchant was the owner of the property and lived on the entresol. Widow Poiret—née Michonneau—kept furnished rooms to let on the first, second and third floors, consisting mostly of small bedrooms let to workmen and the poorer class of students.

Cérezet occupied one room on the ground-floor and one on the entresol, reached by an inner staircase; the entresol was lighted from a horrible paved court-yard from which a most disgusting stench arose. Cérezet paid Widow Poiret forty francs a month for breakfast and dinner; he thus acquired the landlady's good graces by becoming her boarder, and the wine merchant's by helping him to an enormous traffic in wines and liquors, most of which was carried on before sunrise. Monsieur Cadenet's counting-room was open earlier than Cérezet's, who began operations on Tuesday about three o'clock in the morning in summer, and about five in winter. It was regulated by the hour for opening the great market whither many of his customers of both sexes were on their way. Monsieur Cadenet, in consideration

of this custom, which he owed entirely to Cérizet, charged him only eighty francs a year for the two rooms, and he had signed a lease for twelve years which Cérizet alone had the right to put an end to, without penalty, at three months' notice. Every day Cadenet in person brought his invaluable tenant an excellent bottle of wine for his dinner, and when Cérizet's pockets were empty he simply had to say to his friend: "Cadenet, lend me a hundred crowns, will you?" But he invariably paid them back.

Cadenet had, so he said, proof positive that the Widow Poiret had entrusted two thousand francs to Cérizet, which fact would explain his upward progress from the day he took up his abode in the quarter with his last thousand-franc note and Dutocq's patronage. Cadenet, with a thirst for gain which was increased by success, had suggested at the beginning of the year loaning twenty thousand francs to his friend Cérizet, but Cérizet declined the loan, on the pretext that he was then taking risks of a nature to make trouble between him and any partner he might have.

"I couldn't pay you more than six per cent anyway," said he, "and you can make more than that in your business.—We'll go in together later on a matter of some consequence; but a good opportunity is worth at least fifty thousand francs; when you have that sum by you, why we can talk."

Cérizet had gone to Théodore about the matter of the house because he found that Madame Poiret,

Cadenet and himself could not raise a hundred thousand francs between them.

The money-lender was perfectly safe in this den, where he would have found plenty to lend him a hand in case of need. On some mornings there were from sixty to eighty people, men and women, on the wine merchant's premises, either sitting on the stairs in the hall, or in the office, where the suspicious Cérizet would not admit more than six persons at one time. The first comers were served first, and as everyone was admitted by number, the wine merchant or his clerk numbered the men on their hats and the women on their backs.

Those at the head of the line sold their numbers to those at the foot, as cab-drivers do on the cab stands. On certain days, when business was pressing at the market, a place at the head would bring a glass of eau-de-vie and a sou. The exit of one number was the signal for the following number to enter Cérizet's office, and if any dispute arose Cadenet would at once interpose:

"If you get the guard and the police here, will you be any better off? *He* will shut up shop."

He was Cérizet's name. If a wretched, desperate woman, without bread and with children dying of hunger at home, came in to borrow ten or twenty sous, she would ask the wine-shop keeper or his head clerk:

"Is *he* in?"

Cadenet, a short, thickset man, dressed in blue, with black stuff sleeves pulled over his coat sleeves,

a bartender's apron, and a white cap, seemed an angel in disguise to these poor mothers when he would say:

"*He* told me you were an honest woman and that I might give you forty sous. You know what you'll have to do."—And, incredible fact, *he* was blessed, as Popinot was blessed before him.

But they cursed Cérizet on Sunday morning when they settled up with him; they cursed him even more on Saturday when they were working away, in order to be able to return the sum loaned, with interest! But he was Providence, he was God himself, from Tuesday to Friday of every week.

The room in which he carried on his business, formerly the kitchen of the first-floor suite, was unfurnished; the whitewashed beams of the floor above were blackened with smoke. The walls, along which settees were placed, and the sandstone tiles of which the floor was made, alternately stored up and exuded moisture. The fireplace was replaced by an iron stove in which Cérizet burned pit coal in cold weather; but the bell-shaped funnel was still in place. Beneath the funnel was a platform some six feet square and about six inches from the floor, and on it a table worth twenty sous and a wooden arm-chair with a round cushion covered with green leather. Behind his seat Cérizet had had the wall sheathed with what had once been the floor-boards of a boat. Then he was flanked by a little white wood screen to shelter him from the draught from the door and window; but the screen—it had two

leaves—was so arranged as to give him full benefit of the heat from the stove. The window was furnished with heavy inside shutters, lined with sheet-iron and kept in place by an iron bar. The door likewise enjoined respect by a lining of the same material.

At the back of the room, in a corner, was a spiral staircase, once a part of some demolished store and purchased by Cadenet on Rue Chapon. The top of the staircase was fitted into the floor of the entresol, and to make all communication with the first floor impossible Cérezet had demanded that the door on the landing of the entresol should be walled up. Thus his domicile was a regular fortress. Above was his bedroom, which had for furniture a carpet for which he paid twenty francs, an iron bed, a bureau, two chairs, one arm-chair, and an iron chest, after the style of a secretary, made by an excellent mechanic, and purchased by him at second-hand. He shaved before the glass over the mantelpiece; he possessed two pairs of cotton sheets, six fine calico shirts and other things in keeping. Once or twice Cadenet had seen Cérezet dressed like any dandy; in the lower drawer of his bureau lay hid a complete disguise in which he could go to the Opera, aye, or into society, without fear of being recognized, for, had it not been for his voice, Cadenet would have said to him, “What can I do for you?”

The one thing about this man that pleased his *customers* more than anything else, was his jovial

humor, his ready repartees; he spoke their language. Cadenet, his two clerks and Cérezet, living in the very midst of the most squalid poverty, were always as calm and unconcerned as an undertaker's mute with the heirs-at-law, or an old sergeant of the Guard among the dead on the battlefield; they no more groaned as they listened to the shrieks of hunger and despair, than surgeons groan as they listen to their patients in the hospital; and they would say, just as the surgeons and their assistants do, some such meaningless words as: "Have patience, have a little courage! What's the use of getting desperate? Suppose you kill yourself, what then? —A man can get used to anything; have a little common sense," etc.

Although Cérezet took the precaution to conceal the money necessary for his morning's operations in the double back of the chair in which he sat,—to take out but a hundred francs at once, which he put in his breeches pocket,—and to draw on his reserve only between two batches of clients, keeping his door closed and not reopening it until the fresh supply was safely in his pocket,—he had nothing to fear from the different varieties of despair which flocked from all sides to this rendezvous of cash. It is beyond question that there are many ways of being honest or virtuous, and the *Monographie de la Vertu** has no other foundation than that social axiom. Man is false to his conscience, he openly

* A work after the style of the *Physiologie du Mariage*, at which the author has been at work since 1833, when it was announced. (Author's note.)

violates every canon of delicacy, he fails in his duty in nice points of honor, and yet he may not fall into general disesteem; he casts honor to the winds altogether, and yet, even if he lands in the police court, he may not be liable to be brought before the assizes; and, after the verdict of the jury, which makes him a felon, he may be honored at the galleys by carrying thither with him that species of honesty which is known among thieves, and which consists in telling no tales, in dividing plunder fairly, and in incurring the same risks. This last mentioned variety of honesty, which may be the result of calculation, a necessity, if you please, and the practice of which affords a man some opportunities of gaining renown and of profit, too, was never deviated from in Céribet's transactions with his clients. Céribet never made mistakes, nor did his indigent debtors: neither denied the other anything, on the one side in the way of capital, on the other, interest. It had happened several times that Céribet, who was himself of the people, had corrected from one week to another an unintentional error, to the profit of some wretched creature who had not discovered it. So it was that he was looked upon as a dog, if you will, but an honest dog; his word, in that city of sorrow, was sacred. A woman died, who had just borrowed thirty francs.

"There go my profits!" he said to his assembled clients, "and yet you call me names. However, I sha'n't disturb her little brats!—and Cadenet has taken them some bread and sour wine."

Since that cleverly devised stroke it was commonly said of him in two faubourgs:

"He's not a bad sort!"

This business of loaning at extortionate rates for very short periods, as carried on by Céribet, was not, all things considered, so painful a wound in the side of society as the Mont-de-Pieté. Céribet loaned ten francs on Tuesday on condition that twelve francs should be paid him on Sunday morning. Thus he doubled his capital in five weeks, but there was much work to be done for it. His generosity consisted in sometimes recovering only eleven francs and a half; they still owed him the balance. When he loaned fifty francs for sixty to some petty fruit vender, or a hundred for a hundred and twenty to a dealer in peat, he took some chances.

As they walked through Rue des Postes to the corner of Rue des Poules, Théodore and Dutocq noticed a crowd of men and women, and as the light shed by the lamps outside the wine-shop fell upon them, the two friends were almost terrified by the aspect of that confused mass of faces of every possible description, red, grimy, seamed, wrinkled, distorted, bearded, beardless, bloated with wine, made gaunt with absinthe, some threatening, others resigned, some full of banter, others subdued by suffering, some bright, others stupid—and all rising above a wilderness of rags and tatters that no painter has ever surpassed, even in the wildest flights of his fancy.

"I shall be recognized!" said Théodore, drawing

Dutocq away; "we did a foolish thing to come here while he's right in the midst of his morning's business.—"

"Especially as we didn't remember that Claparon sleeps in this den of his, the interior of which we know nothing about. Look here; there are some reasons why it may be inconvenient for you, but there are none so far as I am concerned; I may well have something to say to my copyist, and I'll go and ask him to come to dinner, for there's a session of the court to-day and we shall have no time for lunch; we will make an appointment to meet at the *Chaumière* in one of the booths in the garden—"

"That's a wretched place; somebody may be listening and we not know it," replied the advocate; "I prefer the *Petit Rocher de Cancale*, where people have rooms to themselves and talk low."

"Suppose you are seen with Céritet?"

"All right, let's go to the *Cheval Rouge*, Quai de la Tournelle."

"That's much better; at seven o'clock we sha'n't find any one there."

Dutocq thereupon advanced alone into the centre of the congress of beggars, and heard his name repeated here and there in the crowd, for it would have been strange if he had not fallen in with some police court frequenter there, just as Théodore was likely to encounter some of his clients.

In these neighborhoods the justice of the peace is the court of last resort, and all disputes are settled before him, especially since the enactment of the law

giving him exclusive and final jurisdiction in all cases where the amount at issue does not exceed one hundred and forty francs. Therefore they made way for the clerk, who was no less dreaded than the magistrate himself. He saw women sitting on the stairs, like flowers arranged on steps,—a ghastly spectacle, for among them there were young women and pale-faced, sickly women; the variety of colors, the mixture of neckerchiefs and caps and dresses and aprons made the comparison more apt than comparisons are wont to be, perhaps. Dutocq was almost suffocated when he opened the door of the room through which sixty persons had already passed, leaving their odors behind them.

“Your number? what number?” was the cry.

“Hold your tongues!” cried a hoarse voice in the street; “it’s the justice’s quill-driver.”

Profound silence at once reigned throughout the crowd.

Dutocq found his copyist arrayed in a waistcoat of yellow leather like the gloves worn by the gendarmerie, but beneath it Céritet wore a vulgar knitted woolen waistcoat. One can imagine the effect produced by that ghastly face protruding from such a sheath, and enveloped by a soiled handkerchief which left his forehead and neck bare, and imparted to his features an expression no less disgusting than formidable, especially by the light of a twelve to the pound candle.

“Things can’t go on in this way, Papa Lantimèche,” he was saying to an old man, apparently

seventy years of age, who stood before him with his red woolen cap in his hand, showing his bald head, and through the holes in his wretched smock a breast covered with white hair; "tell me what it is you propose to undertake! A hundred francs aren't to be let loose like a dog in a church, even on condition of paying back a hundred and twenty.—"

The other five occupants of the room, two of whom were women, both nurses, one knitting and the other with a child at her breast, roared with laughter.

When he saw Dutocq, Céritet rose respectfully and walked quickly to meet him, adding as he did so:

"You have time enough to reflect; for, d'ye know, it troubles me to have an old journeyman locksmith like you wanting a hundred francs."

"But it's for an invention!"—cried the old man.

"An invention and a hundred francs!—You don't know the laws; you need two thousand francs," said Dutocq; "you must have a patent and caveats—"

"True," said Céritet, who always reckoned on contingencies of that sort; "I'll tell you, Papa Lantimèche, come to-morrow morning at six and we'll talk it over: people don't talk about their inventions in a crowd."

Thereupon Céritet turned to listen to Dutocq, whose first words were:

"If it's a good thing, let's go halves!"

"Why do you get up so early to come and say that?" demanded the suspicious Céritet, indignant

at the *let's go halves*. "You could have seen me at the office."

He looked askance at Dutocq, who, although he told him the truth, speaking of Claparon and of the necessity of moving promptly in Théodore's affair, seemed to shuffle and squirm.

"You might have seen me this morning at the office," Cérizet repeated, as he accompanied Dutocq to the door.

"There's a man," he said to himself as he resumed his seat, "who acts as if he had blown out his lantern so that I can't see what I'm about. Oh, well, we'll just step out of our copyist's place.—Ah! there you are, little mother!" he cried; "so you're having imaginary children. That's very amusing, although it's a very familiar trick!"

It would be useless to describe the interview between the three confederates, because the arrangements they agreed upon were the basis of Théodore's confidential communication to Mademoiselle Thuillier; but it is essential to remark that the ingenuity displayed by La Peyrade well nigh terrified Cérizet and Dutocq. After that conference the poor man's banker had in his mind, in germ, the idea of slipping out of the game, as he found himself associated with such skilful players. To win the stake at any price, and snatch it away from cleverer players, even though it be by cheating, is one impulse of the type of vanity peculiar to devotees of the green cloth. Whence the terrible blow La Peyrade was destined to receive.

He knew his two associates thoroughly; and for that reason, nothing,—not even the perpetual working of his intellectual powers, not even the constant thought required by his ten-faced character—fatigued him so much as to play his part with them. Dutocq was a consummate cheat, and Céribet had once been an actor; they were artists in expression. An inexpressive face, à la Talleyrand, would have caused them to break with the Provençal, who found that he was in their clutches; so that it was necessary for him to assume an ease of manner, a confidence, a disposition to play fair, which is certainly the acme of art. To deceive the pit is a triumph that may be won any day, but to deceive Mademoiselle Mars, Frédéric Lemaître, Potier, Talma, Monrose, shows the consummate artist.

The result of this conference, then, was to cause La Peyrade, who was quite as clever as Céribet, to feel a secret dread, which, during the last part of this far-reaching game, heated his blood and excited his heart at times to such a degree that he became like the inveterate gambler following the roulette ball with his eyes when he has staked his last sou. At such times the faculties act with a clear-sightedness, the intelligence attains a reach for which human science has no measure.

On the day following the conference La Peyrade dined with the Thuilliers, and, on the transparent pretext that he had to call upon Madame de Saint-Foudrille, wife of the famous scientist, whose interest he desired to secure, Thuillier carried off

his wife and left Théodore with Brigitte. Neither Thuillier nor his sister nor Théodore was the dupe in the comedy that was being played; *diplomacy*, the old beau of the Empire called it.

"Young man, do not impose upon my sister's innocence, but respect it," said Thuillier solemnly before leaving the house.

"Mademoiselle," said Théodore, as he moved his chair near the couch on which Brigitte sat knitting, "have you thought of enlisting the business men of the arrondissement in Thuillier's candidacy?"

"How, pray?" said she.

"Why, you have business relations with Barbet and Métivier."

"Of course! you're right!—Bless my soul!" said she after a pause; "you're no fool!"

"When one is fond of people one tries to be of service to them!" he replied, shortly and distantly.

The seduction of Brigitte was the culminating point in this long battle which had been in progress two years,—it might be compared to carrying the great redoubt *à la Moskowa*, it was the climax of the battle. But it was necessary that the old maid should be possessed as the devil was supposed to possess people in the Middle Ages, and in such a way as to make it impossible that she should ever awake. For three days La Peyrade had been comparing his own powers with the task, and had made the circuit of the works in order to judge accurately the difficulties to be encountered! Flattery, that infallible expedient in skilful

hands, passed harmlessly over the head of a damsel who had known for many years that she had no pretensions to beauty. But to the determined man no place is impregnable and the Lamarques will always find a way to carry Caprea by storm. We must, therefore, omit no detail of the memorable scene that took place on that evening; everything has its importance—moments of silence, lowered eyes, tones of the voice and glances.

"But you have already proved your affection for us," rejoined Brigitte.

"Did your brother speak to you?"

"No, he simply said that you had something to say to me."

"And so I have, Mademoiselle, for you are the man of the family; but on reflection I have found that I incur considerable risk in the matter, and a man doesn't compromise himself thus for his neighbors.—There's a whole fortune at stake, thirty or forty thousand francs a year, and not a particle of speculation about it,—real estate!—The necessity of giving Thuillier a fortune to live on misled me first of all. There's a sort of fascination about it, as I said to him;—for, unless a man's a fool, he must ask himself: 'Why is he so anxious to put me ahead?' And, as I said to him: in working for him I flattered myself that I was working for myself. If he wants to be a deputy two things are absolutely necessary: to pay the tax and get some man of note to propose his name. If I carry my friendship so far as to try and help him compose a book on the public credit,

or any other subject, no matter what—I must think about his fortune, too,—and it would be absurd for you to give him this house.—”

“My brother?—Why I’d put it in his name tomorrow!” cried Brigitte; “you don’t know me—”

“I don’t know you perfectly,” said La Peyrade, “but I know things of you that have made me regret that I didn’t tell you everything at the beginning, the moment I devised the plan to which Thuillier will owe his election. There will be those who envy him the next day, and he’ll certainly have a hard task; but we must cover them with confusion, and deprive his rivals of every possible pretext!”

“But about this business you were speaking of,” said Brigitte, “what are the difficulties?”

“Mademoiselle, the difficulties come from my conscience,—and I certainly shall not serve you in this matter without consulting my confessor.—As far as the world is concerned, why it’s perfectly legal, and I,—you will understand that I, an advocate whose name is inscribed on the roll, and member of an order governed by the strictest rules,—am incapable of suggesting a blameworthy project.—My excuse will be in the first place that I do not make one sou out of it.”

Brigitte was on the gridiron, her cheeks were on fire, she kept breaking her yarn and tying knots in it, and did not know what attitude to take.

“Nowadays,” said she, “you can’t get forty thousand francs a year out of real estate unless you lay out a million and three quarters.—”

"Oh! I'll undertake that you shall see the property and estimate the probable income from it, and I will see that Thuillier gets it for fifty thousand francs."

"Well, if you should put such a thing as that in our way," cried Brigitte, excited to the highest pitch by the spur of her thoroughly aroused cupidity, "why, my dear Monsieur Théodore—"

She paused.

"Well, Mademoiselle?"

"You'll have done a good stroke of work for yourself, perhaps—"

"Ah! if Thuillier has told you my secret, I'll leave the house."

Brigitte raised her head.

"Has he told you that I love Céleste?"

"No, on an honest woman's word!" cried Brigitte; "but I was going to speak to you about her."

"To offer her to me!—Oh! may God forgive us! I prefer to owe her hand to herself, to her parents, to her unbiased choice.—No, I ask nothing from you but your good will and your good word.—Promise, as Thuillier has done, as the reward of my services, your friendship, your influence; tell me that you will treat me as a son.—And, in that case, I will consult you. I will abide by your decision and say nothing to my confessor. In these two years that I have been watching the family into which I hoped to introduce my name, and which I should be happy to endow with my energetic nature—for I shall succeed!—I have noticed especially your old-fashioned

probity, your upright, unerring judgment. You are a good business woman, and one likes to have such qualities in one's neighbors.—With a mother-in-law of your strength of character my home life would be freed from a mass of petty financial details which bar one's progress in politics, as soon as one has to give his attention to them.—I really admired you on Sunday night.—Ah! You were beautiful then! And you moved everything yourself! In ten minutes the dining-room was cleared! And, without leaving the house, you laid your hand on everything that was needed for refreshments and for the supper.—‘That's a woman in ten thousand!’—I said to myself.”

Brigitte's nostrils dilated as she breathed in the young advocate's words; and he cast a glance at her out of the corner of his eyes to enjoy his triumph. He had touched the sensitive chord.

“Ah!” said she, “I'm used to housekeeping; I know all about that!”

“If I consult a clean, pure conscience?” mused Théodore; “yes, that will satisfy my scruples.”

He was standing, but he resumed his seat and began:

“This is how the case stands, my dear aunt—for you will be my aunt in a way—”

“Be still, you bad boy!” said Brigitte; “go on.”

“I am going to tell you everything frankly, and do you take notice that I compromise myself by so doing, for these are professional secrets entrusted to me as a lawyer. Imagine if you please that we are

committing together the crime of assailing the sanctity of the lawyer's office! A notary in Paris went into partnership with an architect, and they purchased real estate and built upon it; at the present moment values are falling rapidly—they went astray in their reckoning,—but we won't bother about all that.—Among the houses put up by them during their illegal association, for notaries are not permitted to engage in building operations—there is one which, being unfinished, is depreciating so rapidly that it can be bought for little more than a hundred thousand francs, although the land and the building have already cost more than four hundred thousand. There is nothing to be done to it except on the inside, and as the necessary finishings are all ready in the contractors' hands and they will sell them at a bargain, the whole additional outlay won't be more than fifty thousand francs;—nothing is easier than to estimate it. Its location is such that the house will bring in forty thousand a year, clear of taxes. It is built of cut stone and the party-walls are all of rough stone; the front is covered with rich carvings,—more than twenty thousand francs were spent on them; the window-frames are of iron in the new style, called *Cremona.*"

"Well, what's the difficulty?"

"It's just this: the notary reserved this for himself out of the spoil he gave up, and he is one of the creditors, in the name of some friend, who is looking on while the property is sold by the assignee in bankruptcy; there has been no prosecution, for that

would cost too much—the whole thing is voluntary. Now, this notary has applied to one of my clients to lend him his name as a purchaser; my client is a poor devil, and he said to me: ‘There’s fortune in this, if we can get it away from the notary—’”

“Such things are done in business!”—said Brigitte, eagerly.

“If there were no obstacle but that,” rejoined Théodore, “I might say, as one of my friends said to a pupil, who was complaining because it was so hard to paint great pictures: ‘My dear boy, if it weren’t so hard, our footmen would do it!’ But, Mademoiselle, if we should succeed in getting the better of this horrid notary,—who, upon my word, deserves to be caught, for he has destroyed many private fortunes,—he’s a very shrewd fellow, although he is a notary, and it might be very hard to catch him twice. When a person purchases real estate, if they who have loaned money on it find themselves in danger of losing something on account of the insufficiency of the price, they have the right, within a certain time, to outbid the purchaser,—that is to say, to offer a larger sum and keep the property for themselves. If the first purchaser cannot get the better of his antagonist within the time allowed him to make a further bid, he must substitute some new ruse for the former one. But is this really a legal transaction?—Ought one to enter into it for the benefit of the family he wishes to enter?—That’s the question I’ve been asking myself for three days.—”

Brigitte, it must be confessed, hesitated, and Théodore thereupon resorted to his last expedient.

"Take the night for reflection," he said, "and to-morrow we will talk further about it.—"

"Listen, my boy," said Brigitte, looking at the advocate with an expression that was almost amorous, "first of all we must see the house. Where is it?"

"Near the Madeleine! that will be the heart of Paris ten years hence! And, if you did but know it, people have had their eyes on that region since 1819! The fortune of Du Tillet, the banker, was obtained there.—The notorious failure of Roguin, the notary, which threw Paris into such a panic, and dealt such a blow at the esteem commonly entertained for the notarial office,—the failure that broke the noted perfumer Birotteau,—had no other cause than this, that they bought property there for speculative purposes a little too soon."

"I remember that," said Brigitte.

"The house can certainly be finished by the end of this year, and the rents begin to come in about the middle of next year."

"Can we go there to-morrow?"

"My dear aunt, I am at your service."

"Stop that! don't call me that before anybody.—As to the matter in hand," she continued, "I can't form any opinion until I've seen the house."—

"It has six floors, nine windows on the front, a fine court-yard, four shops, and it's on a corner. Oh! the notary knows what he's about, never

fear! But let some political crisis come, and consols and all other securities fall. If I were in your place, I'd sell everything Madame Thuillier has and all your holdings in the public funds, to buy this fine property for Thuillier, and then make good the poor pious creature's fortune out of future savings. Can consols ever go higher than they are to-day? A hundred and twenty-two! it's perfectly fabulous; you must make haste."

Brigitte smacked her lips; she saw a way of keeping her own capital intact and of enriching her brother at Madame Thuillier's expense.

"My brother is quite right," said she to Théodore, "you're a rare man, and you'll succeed."

"He will go ahead of me!" replied Théodore, with a sincerity which touched the old maid's heart.

"You shall be one of the family," said she.

"There will be obstacles in the way," said Théodore, "Madame Thuillier's mind is a little awry and she scarcely loves me."

"Ah! I'd like to see her interfere!" cried Brigitte. "Let us put this business through if it can be done, and do you leave your interests in my hands."

"Thuillier, member of the General Council, proprietor of an estate let for forty thousand a year, decorated with the Cross, author of a profound, thoughtful political work, will surely be chosen deputy at an early date. But, between ourselves, my dear aunt, a man can't show such devotion as this to anyone except his real father-in-law—"

"You are right."

"Although I have no fortune, I shall have doubled yours; and if this matter is carried through discreetly, I shall look about for others."

"Until I have seen the house," said Mademoiselle Thuillier, "I can decide upon nothing."

"Very well; we'll take a carriage to-morrow and go there; I will have a permit in the morning to inspect the house."

"To-morrow about noon," Brigitte replied, giving him her hand to cement the compact between them; but he deposited thereupon the most affectionate and at the same time the most respectful kiss that Brigitte had ever received.

"Adieu, my child!" said she, when he was at the door.

She hastily summoned one of her servants, and said to her when she appeared:

"Joséphine, go at once to Madame Colleville's and ask her to come here and talk with me."

Fifteen minutes later Flavie entered the salon, where Brigitte was pacing back and forth in tremendous excitement.

"My dear," said she, "you can do me a very great service in a matter that concerns our dear Céleste. You know Tullia, the dancer at the Opera? —My brother used to din her praises into my ears, when—"

"Yes, my dear; but she isn't a dancer now, she is Madame la Comtesse du Bruel. Isn't her husband a peer of France—"

"Is she still fond of you?"

"We never see each other now."

"Well, I know that Chaffaroux, the rich contractor, is her uncle," said the old maid. "He's an old man and very rich. Do you go and see your former friend, and get her to write a line to her uncle telling him that he would do her a very great favor if he would consent to give a little friendly advice upon a matter of business that you wish to consult him upon, and then we'll go and see him at one o'clock to-morrow. But tell her that she must make him promise absolute secrecy. Go, my child! Céleste, our dear girl, will be a millionaire, and she shall have, from my hand, you understand, a husband who will place her at the top of the tree."

"Do you want me to tell you the first letter of his name?"

"Yes."

"Théodore de la Peyrade! You are quite right. He's a man, who, with such a woman as you behind him, may yet be a minister!"

"It was God who sent him to our house," cried the old maid.

At that moment, Monsieur and Madame Thuillier returned.

*

Five days afterward, in the month of April, the warrant summoning the electors to assemble on the twentieth of that month for the selection of a member of the Municipal Council, was inserted in the *Moniteur* and posted throughout Paris. For several weeks the so-called ministry of March 1 had been in office. Brigitte was in a most charming humor, for she had verified all Théodore's assertions. Old Chaffaroux inspected the house from top to bottom and declared it to be a masterpiece of the builder's art. Poor Grindot, the architect who was interested in the affairs of the notary and Claparon, thought that he was working for the contractor; Madame du Bruel's uncle imagined that his niece was personally interested, and he said that he would finish the house for thirty thousand francs. And so La Peyrade had been, for a week, Brigitte's god; she proved to him by the most innocently pernicious arguments that fortune must be seized and held when she comes within reach.

"Well, if there is anything wrong about it," she said to him one day in the garden, "you can ease your mind in the confessional—"

"Nonsense, my dear," cried Thuillier; "deuce take it! a man owes something to his relations—"

"I will make up my mind to do it," replied La

Peyrade, with emotion, "but only on certain conditions. I do not propose to be taxed with cupidity or avariciousness because I marry Céleste. If you give me cause for remorse, at least let me remain what I am in the eyes of the public. Give to Céleste, my old friend Thuillier, nothing but a reversionary interest in the house I am going to put in your way—"

"That's fair."

"Don't rob yourself," said Théodore, "and my dear little aunt must bear the same thing in mind in reference to the contract. Invest the balance of the floating capital in the funds in Madame Thuillier's name, and let her do what she pleases. Then we will all live together, and I will undertake to make my own fortune as soon as my mind is at rest concerning the future."

"That's what I like," cried Thuillier. "Spoken like an honest man."

"Let me kiss you, my boy!" cried the old maid; "but there must be a *dot* all the same, and we'll give Céleste sixty thousand francs."

"For her dress," said La Peyrade.

"We are all three honorable people," cried Thuillier. "It's agreed that you will arrange the affair of the house for us, we will write my political work together, and you will do your best to get me the Cross.—"

"That will come on the first of May, as you will then be a Municipal Councillor. But, do you, my good friend, and you, too, dear aunt, preserve the

utmost secrecy, and don't listen to the slanderous stories that will be flying around about me when all the men I propose to hoodwink turn against me. I shall be a vagabond, a knave, a dangerous man, a Jesuit, an ambitious scoundrel, a fortune-hunter.—Will you listen to such charges without losing your head?"

"Never fear," said Brigitte.

From that day forth Thuillier became everybody's *good friend*. Good friend was the name given him by Théodore, in tones expressive of so many different varieties of affection, that Flavie was bewildered. But the *dear aunt*, the title which so flattered Brigitte, was used only among the Thuilliers, sometimes before Flavie, and was whispered when others were present. The activity of Théodore and of Dutocq, Céritet, Barbet, Métivier, the Minards, the Phellions, the Laudigeois, Colleville, Pron and Barniol, was something incredible. Great and small alike put their hands to the plough. Cadenet procured thirty votes in his section; he wrote for seven electors who could do no more than make their mark. On the thirtieth of April Thuillier was declared a Member of the General Council of the Department of the Seine, by a most imposing majority, for he received all but sixty of the votes cast. On May 1, Thuillier joined the Council and went with it to the Tuileries to congratulate the king upon his birthday. He returned radiant with joy! He had entered the château in Minard's wake.

Ten days after the election a yellow placard

announced the sale of the house under voluntary bankruptcy proceedings, the upset price being fixed at seventy-five thousand francs; the final adjustment was to take place in the latter part of July. On this subject there was an understanding between Cérezet and Claparon, whereby Cérezet promised to contribute fifteen thousand francs,—in words, be it understood,—to Claparon, in case he should succeed in hoodwinking the notary beyond the time allowed by law for raising the bid. Mademoiselle Thuillier, when notified by Théodore, agreed unconditionally to this secret arrangement, for she understood that the abettors of this pretty bit of treachery must be paid. The money was to pass through the conscientious advocate's hands. Claparon made an appointment at midnight on Place de l'Observatoire with his accomplice, the notary, whose office was still unsold, although offered for sale by a decision of the disciplinary committee of the Notaries of Paris.

This young man, Léopold Hannequin's successor, had undertaken to attain fortune by running to meet it instead of going at a foot pace; he still fancied that better things were in store for him, and he was trying to smooth matters over. In this interview he went so far as to offer ten thousand francs to make himself secure in this corrupt affair; he was to hand the sum to Claparon after the purchaser at the sale had executed a defeasance. The notary knew that this money was all that Claparon had to depend upon for the nucleus of a new fortune, and he thought he was sure of him.

"Who is there in Paris who could give me such a commission for an affair of this sort?" said Claparon, with feigned simplicity. "Go to sleep on both ears; I shall put forward as the ostensible purchaser one of those so-called honorable men who are too stupid to have ideas of your sort. He's an old retired government clerk; you give him the money to pay, and he'll sign your defeasance."

When the notary had made it clear to Claparon that he could get no more than ten thousand francs out of him, Cérizet offered his quondam partner twelve thousand and then demanded fifteen thousand from Théodore, with the intention of turning over only twelve thousand to Claparon. All this haggling among these four men was seasoned with most exalted speeches concerning sentiment and business rectitude; and concerning what those men, whose destiny it was to work thus in unison and to be constantly together, owed to one another. While these submarine works were being constructed for the benefit of Thuillier, to whom Théodore described them with continual asseverations of his profound distaste for meddling in such underhand business, the two friends were meditating together upon the great work which *my good friend* was to give to the world; and the member of the General Council of the Seine became firmly imbued with the conviction that he could never make anything of himself without the aid of this man of genius, whose intellect aroused his wondering admiration, whose marvelous facility surprised him, so that each day he discovered

some new unanswerable argument for making him his son-in-law. After the first of June, Théodore dined four days out of the seven with *his good friend*.

It was the moment when Théodore reigned without a rival over the whole family; he was honored with the approbation of all their friends. This is how it came about. The Phellions, when they heard Brigitte and Thuillier singing Théodore's praises, feared to offend those two powers, and so they joined in the chorus, however much these perpetual eulogies might annoy them or seem exaggerated to them. It was the same with the Minard family. Moreover, La Peyrade's bearing, now that he had become the *friend of the family*, was invariably sublime; he disarmed suspicion by the way in which he effaced himself; he was like an additional piece of furniture in the house; he made the Phellions and the Minards believe that he had been reckoned up and weighed by Brigitte and Thuillier and found too light to be anything more than a pleasant young fellow for whom they might do something.

"Perhaps he thinks my sister will put him down in her will," said Thuillier one day to Minard; "he hardly knows her."

This remark, which was Théodore's work, quieted the suspicious Minard's anxiety.

"He is devoted to us," said the old maid to Phellion one day, "but indeed he ought to be grateful to us; we give him his rent, and he almost lives here."

This fling, which was also inspired by Théodore,

flew from ear to ear in the families which frequented the Thuillier salon, and put all fear to flight. Théodore, too, emphasized the caustic utterances of Thuillier and his sister by affecting the servile demeanor of a parasite. At whist he explained his *good friend's* misplays. His smile, as unchanging and benignant as Madame Thuillier's, was ever ready to welcome the inane vulgar witticisms of the brother and sister.

He obtained what he most ardently desired, the contempt of his real antagonists, and used it as a cloak to hide his power. For four months his face wore the torpid expression of a serpent as he salivates and digests his prey. He would run into the garden at intervals with Colleville or Flavie to lay aside his mask, to laugh at will, to rest and renew his strength, abandoning himself to nervous outbreaks of passion in the presence of his future mother-in-law, which terrified her or touched her heart.

"Don't you pity me?" he said to her the night before the preliminary adjudication, at which Thuillier bought the house for seventy-five thousand francs. "To see a man like me crawling about like a cat, holding back my epigrams, eating my own gall!—and to cap the climax, having to put up with your cruelty!"

"My friend, my child!" said Flavie, who had not yet made up her mind what course to pursue.

These words are a thermometer which will indicate the temperature at which this accomplished

artist maintained his intrigue with Flavie. The poor woman was wavering between the promptings of her heart and the precepts of morality, between religion and the mysterious passion.

Meanwhile, Félix Phellion, with praiseworthy devotion and perseverance, was giving lessons to young Colleville; he was most lavish of his time, and fancied that he was working for his future family. In acknowledgment of his zeal, and by Théodore's advice, the professor was invited to dine with the Collevilles on Thursdays, and the advocate never failed to be there. Flavie made purses, slippers and cigar-cases for the happy youth, who would exclaim:

"I am too well paid, Madame, by the joy it affords me to be of service to you."

"We aren't rich, Monsieur," Colleville would reply, "but, deuce take it! we're not ungrateful."

Old Phellion would rub his hands as he listened to his son on his return from these joyous occasions, and he could already see his dear, his noble Félix leading Céleste to the altar!

Nevertheless, the more truly Céleste loved him, the more serious and thoughtful was her demeanor with Félix, especially as her mother had preached rather sharply to her one evening.

"Don't give young Phellion any hope, my child," she said. "Neither your father nor I will have any hand in marrying you; you have definite prospects to keep in mind; it's of much less importance to be agreeable to a penniless professor than to make sure

of Mademoiselle Brigitte's affection and your god-father's. If you don't want to kill your mother, my angel,—yes, kill me,—obey me blindly in this affair, and get the idea fixed in your brain that we desire your happiness before everything."

As the final adjudication was appointed for the latter part of July, Théodore advised Brigitte, toward the end of June, to make her preparations, and she sold all of her sister's holdings and her own in the public funds just in time. The catastrophe of the treaty between the Four Powers, a downright insult to France, is a fact in history, but it is necessary to remember that, from early in July until late in August, French *rentes*, affected by the prospect of war, which Monsieur Thiers was a little too willing to risk, fell twenty francs, and the three per cents sold at sixty. Nor was that all; the financial panic had a most disastrous effect upon real estate values in Paris, and all property of that description sold at auction in those days brought almost nothing. Thus Théodore was proved to be a prophet, a man of genius, in the eyes of Brigitte and Thuillier, to whom the property was finally awarded for seventy-five thousand francs. The notary, who was involved in this political disaster, and whose office was sold, found it advisable to go into the country for a few days; but he clung to Claparon's ten thousand francs. By Théodore's advice, Thuillier made a contract with Grindot, who supposed he was finishing the house for the notary; and as crowds of mechanics were left with nothing to do but

fold their hands by the suspension of work on many buildings during this period of financial disturbance, the architect was able to complete a task after his own heart in splendid style at a very low figure. For twenty-five thousand francs he gilded four salons!—Théodore demanded that the contract be put in writing and that fifty thousand francs be substituted for twenty-five.

This purchase doubled Thuillier's importance. As for the notary, he had lost his head in consequence of the political upheaval, which was like a thunderbolt out of a cloudless sky. Théodore, sure of his ascendancy, relying upon the services he had rendered the family, holding Thuillier fast by virtue of the work they were jointly engaged upon, and vastly admired by Brigitte because of his discretion, for he never made the slightest allusion to his own narrow means and never mentioned money,—Théodore began to assume a somewhat less servile manner than formerly.

"Nothing can deprive you of our esteem," said Brigitte and Thuillier; "this is your home. Minard's opinion and Phellion's, which you seem so afraid of, are worth as much as one of Victor Hugo's couplets to us. So, hold up your head,—let them say what they please!"

"We need them to secure Thuillier's election to the Chamber!" said Théodore. "Follow my advice; you find it's good, don't you? When the house is really yours, you will have got it for nothing, for you can buy three per cents at sixty in Madame

Thuillier's name, and restore her whole fortune. Just wait until the time has expired for raising our bid, and have the fifteen thousand francs ready for our rascals."

Brigitte did not wait; she invested all her capital, except a hundred and twenty thousand francs, and, deducting her sister-in-law's fortune, she purchased four hundred thousand francs of three per cents—twelve thousand a year—in Madame Thuillier's name, for two hundred and forty thousand; and ten thousand a year in the same funds in her own name, having determined to have done with the bother of discounting notes. She considered it certain that her brother would have forty thousand a year besides his pension; Madame Thuillier had twelve thousand a year, and she herself eighteen thousand; in all seventy thousand a year, besides the house they occupied, which she valued at eight thousand.

"Now we're as well off as the Minards!"—she cried.

"Let's not shout victory yet," said Théodore: "the time for raising our bid won't expire for a week. I have attended to your business for you, but my own affairs are in a very bad way."

"My dear child, you have friends!" cried Brigitte, "and if you want twenty-five louis you will always find them here!"

At that Théodore exchanged a smile with Thuillier, who took him aside and said:

"You must excuse my sister; she looks at the

world through the neck of a bottle.—But if you should need twenty-five thousand francs, I would lend them to you,—out of my first rents,” he added.

“Thuillier, I have a rope around my neck,” cried Théodore. “Since I have been an advocate I have given notes—but mum’s the word!—” he added, as if dismayed at having divulged the secret of his situation. “I am in the clutches of a lot of scoundrels,—I propose to crush them—”

Théodore had a twofold motive in letting his secret escape him; to test Thuillier, and to ward off a dangerous blow which might be aimed at him in the bitter, ominous struggle he had long anticipated. Two words will suffice to explain his horrible plight.

During the period of utter destitution, through which he had passed, Cérezet was the only person who came to see him,—and he did so one very cold day in the attic where he was lying in bed for lack of clothes. He had nothing on but a shirt. For three days he had lived on a single loaf of bread, cutting it off in small pieces with great forethought; and he was just asking himself: “What am’ I to do?” when his former patron appeared, having been released from prison by pardon. It would be useless to tell of the schemes formed by these two men as they sat before a fire of twigs, one enveloped in his landlady’s coverlet, the other in his infamy. The next day Cérezet, who had met Dutocq during the morning, brought Théodore a pair of breeches, a waistcoat, a coat, a hat and boots purchased at the Temple, and carried him

off to dinner at Pinson's, Rue de l'Ancienne-Comédie, where the Provençal ate half of a dinner that cost forty-seven francs. At dessert, between two glasses of wine, Cérezet said to his friend:

"Will you give me your notes for fifty thousand francs payable when I procure your admission as an advocate?"

"You wouldn't get five thousand francs for them," replied Théodore.

"That doesn't concern you; you'll pay them in full; that's our share, his who pays for this dinner, and mine, in a little matter in which you risk nothing, but which will be worth to you the title of advocate, a handsome practice, and the hand of a damsel about the age of an old dog, and with twenty to thirty thousand francs a year. Neither Dutocq nor I can marry her; so we must fit you out, make you look like an honest man, feed you, set you up in lodgings and furnish them for you.—Of course, we must be secured. I don't say that for myself, for I know you, but for monsieur who will act through me.—We'll fit you out as a corsair, eh? to trade in white women. If we don't capture that *dot*, why, we'll try something else.—Between ourselves we don't need to handle things with tongs, that's plain enough. We will give you your instructions, for the affair is likely to be a long one; there'll be lots of pulling and hauling!—I have the stamps all ready—"

"Bring pen and ink, waiter!" said Théodore.

"That's the kind of man I like!" cried Dutocq.

"Sign 'Théodore de la Peyrade,' and describe yourself: 'Advocate, Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer,' under the words: *Accepted for ten thousand*; we'll put in the date, and bring suit against you, all in secret, so as to have the right to arrest you. The owners ought to have some security when the captain and his brig are at sea."

On the day following his reception as an advocate, the clerk to the justice of the peace did Céribet the service of issuing a writ secretly; he called upon the advocate in the evening, and everything was arranged without publicity. The Tribunal of Commerce issues such judgments by the hundred at every session.

Everyone knows the strict regulations of the council of the order of advocates of the Paris bar. That body and the order of attorneys maintain stern discipline among their members. An advocate who becomes liable to imprisonment at Clichy would be stricken from the roll. Céribet, by Dutocq's advice, had taken the only measures against their puppet that seemed certain to assure them twenty-five thousand francs each out of Céleste's dowry. When he signed the notes Théodore saw nothing beyond the fact that his life was saved; but as the horizon grew brighter, as he mounted step by step to a more and more elevated position on the social ladder, playing the part assigned him, he dreamed of getting rid of his two partners. If he could get twenty-five thousand francs from Thuillier, he hoped to be able to

compromise with Cérizet, and take up his notes at fifty per cent of their face value.

Unhappily such infamous speculations as this are by no means exceptional, they are carried on in Paris with too little pretence of disguise for the historian to pass them by in an accurate and complete picture of society. Dutocq, a thorough libertine, still owed fifteen thousand francs of the price of his clerkship, and, in the hope of a successful issue to his speculation, he was endeavoring, to use a vulgar expression, to stretch the thong until the latter part of 1840.

Up to this time no one of the three had flinched or howled. Each of them realized his strength and was conscious of the danger. The same suspicion, the same close watch upon one another, the same apparent confidence, the same threatening silence or threatening glance when their mutual distrust showed for a moment in their faces or their words. For the last two months Théodore's position had given him an advantage quite unshared by them. Dutocq and Cérizet had a heap of powder under their skiff and the match was always lighted; but the wind might blow out the match and the devil might drench the powder.

The moment when wild animals are about to feed has always been deemed the most dangerous, and this moment arrived with these three starving tigers. Cérizet's eyes would sometimes say to La Peyrade, with that revolutionary gleam which sovereigns have seen twice in this century:

"I have made you king, and I am nobody. So long as I am not everything, I am nobody."

A jealous reaction was carrying everything before it like an avalanche in Cérezet's mind. Dutocq found himself at the mercy of his enriched copyist. Théodore would have liked to burn up his two fellow-swindlers and their papers in two separate fires. All three were too intent upon concealing their thoughts for the others not to guess them. Théodore's life was worse than three hells as he thought behind his cards of his stake and his future. His exclamation to Thuillier was a shriek of despair; he took soundings in the old bourgeois' waters, and found only twenty-five thousand francs.

"And to be worse than nobody a month hence, perhaps!" he said to himself, as he went to his room.

He conceived an intense hatred of the Thuilliers. But he held Thuillier by a harpoon fastened in the very vitals of his self-esteem by a projected work entitled, *Concerning Taxes and the Sinking-Fund*, wherein he proposed to arrange the ideas published by the Saint-Simonian *Globe* newspaper, coloring them with his Southern style, and systematizing them. Thuillier's lack of knowledge of the subject-matter was Théodore's reliance. He took his stand thereon, and resolved to combat the vanity of a donkey with no better base of operations than that. It may prove to be of granite or of sand, according to the character of the man. Upon reflection, he was glad that he had confided in him.

"When he sees that I make his fortune certain by turning over the fifteen thousand francs just when I am so sorely in need of money, he will look upon me as the god of probity."

Claparon and Cérizet took the following measures with the notary two days before the expiration of the time allowed for outbidding the purchaser of the house. Cérizet, having received the pass-word from Claparon, who told him where the notary was in hiding, went to see him.

"One of my friends," he said, "Claparon, whom you know, asked me to come and see you; he will look for you day after to-morrow in the evening, you know where; he has the paper you are waiting for, and he will hand it to you in exchange for the ten thousand francs agreed upon; but I am to be present when the money is paid, for he owes me five thousand,—and I warn you, my dear sir, that the name in the defeasance is left blank."

"I will be there," said the ex-notary.

The poor devil waited all night at the rendezvous in an agony of anxiety that can be imagined, for it was a question of his salvation or his final ruin. But, at sunrise, instead of Claparon a sheriff's officer appeared, armed with a judgment in due form, and informed him that he must accompany him to Clichy.

Cérizet had made a bargain with one of the ill-fated notary's creditors, undertaking to betray him in consideration of half the amount of his debt. Out of the ten thousand francs intended for Claparon,

the victim of this ambuscade was compelled to pay six thousand on the spot to retain his freedom. That was the full amount of the debt.

"There's a thousand crowns," said Cérizet to himself, as he pocketed his share of the extortion, "with which to pack Claparon off."

He called again upon the notary and said to him: "Claparon's a mean scoundrel, Monsieur! he has received fifteen thousand francs from the purchaser, who retains the property.—Threaten to disclose his hiding-place to his creditors, and to enter a complaint against him alleging fraudulent bankruptcy, and he'll give you half of it."

In his rage the notary wrote a blustering letter to Claparon. Claparon was in despair, fearing arrest, and Cérizet undertook to procure him a passport.

"You have made a fool of me many a time, Claparon," said Cérizet; "but do you listen to me now and judge me. My whole fortune is a thousand crowns,—I am going to give them to you! Go to America, and start over again to make your fortune, as I am doing here."

That evening Claparon, disguised by Cérizet as an old woman, started for Havre by diligence. Cérizet thus found himself in a position to receive the fifteen thousand francs demanded by Claparon, and he calmly awaited Théodore's coming, without undertaking to hasten matters. This man, whose intelligence was really of a rare order, had at his disposal, under the name of a creditor for two thousand francs, a contractor for labor who was not

upon the list of those regularly entitled to offer a bid in excess of the sum paid at the forced sale. It was an idea of Dutocq's, which Cérizet was not slow to put in execution. They could readily demand fifteen thousand francs to get rid of this latest rival, which meant seven thousand five hundred more in his pocket, and he needed it to adjust a matter exactly similar to Thuillier's; it had been suggested to him by Claparon, whom disaster seemed to render stupid. There was a house on Rue Geoffroy-Marie which was to be sold for sixty thousand francs. The Widow Poiret offered him ten thousand, the wine merchant a similar sum and notes for ten thousand. These thirty thousand francs, with what he was soon to have and six thousand he already had, would permit him to try his luck, especially as the twenty-five thousand francs due from Théodore seemed certain to be paid.

"The time for raising our bid has passed," said Théodore to himself, as he was on his way to ask Dutocq to send for Cérizet; "suppose I should try to shake off my bloodsucker?"

"You can't arrange this affair anywhere except at Cérizet's, for Claparon is there," said Dutocq.

So, between seven and eight o'clock, Théodore went to the lair of the poor man's banker, whom Dutocq had advised in the morning of the intended visit of their capitalist.

La Peyrade was received by Cérizet in the ghastly kitchen where sufferings were hashed, and the miseries, of which we have caught a glimpse, were

cooked. The two men paced to and fro, for all the world like caged beasts, as they enacted the following scene:

“Have you brought the fifteen thousand francs?”

“No, but I have them at home.”

“Why not in your pocket?” demanded Cérizet, sourly.

“You shall know,” replied the advocate, who had decided on the course he would adopt, on his way from Rue Saint-Dominique to the Estrapade. As he twisted and turned on the gridiron on which his two confederates had placed him, the Provençal saw a bright idea sparkling amid the glowing coals. Peril has its inspirations. He relied upon the power of perfect frankness, which has its effect upon every man, even a swindler. One almost always thinks well of an adversary who strips himself to the waist in a duel.

“Good,” said Cérizet, “the farce is beginning—”

This was an ominous retort, and had a most horrible sound, being uttered entirely through the nose.

“You have put me in a magnificent position, and I shall never forget it, my friend,” continued Théodore, with emotion.

“Oh! that’s your game!” said Cérizet.

“Look here: you don’t doubt my intentions?”

“Indeed I do!—” retorted the usurer.

“No.”

“You don’t mean to give up the fifteen thousand.—”

Théodore shrugged his shoulders and looked Cérizet squarely in the eye; that worthy was duly impressed by these two movements and held his peace.

"Could you live in the position I am in, knowing that you were at the muzzle of a loaded cannon, without wishing to put an end to it?—Listen to me. You are engaged in a dangerous business, and you would be very glad to have a protector you can depend upon at the fountain-head of justice in Paris.—I can, if I follow my own road, be deputy king's attorney, perhaps *avocat général*, three years hence. To-day I offer you a firm friendship, which will certainly be of service to you, were it only to regain an honorable position hereafter. Here are my conditions—"

"Conditions!" cried Cérizet.

"In ten minutes I will bring you twenty-five thousand francs, in exchange for all the notes you hold against me."

"And Dutocq? and Claparon?" cried Cérizet.

"You can throw them over," whispered Théodore in his friend's ear.

"That's very pretty" said Cérizet, "and you have thought up this sleight-of-hand performance because you happen to be in command of fifteen thousand francs that don't belong to you!"

"I am adding ten thousand to them.—But, come, we know each other—"

"If you can get ten thousand francs out of your bourgeois friends," said Cérizet, quickly, "you

shall ask them for fifteen. At thirty I'm your man.—Frankness for frankness."

"You ask what is impossible!" cried Théodore.

"At this moment, if you were dealing with a Claparon, your fifteen thousand francs would be lost, for the house belongs to our Thuillier."

"I'll go and tell him," replied Cérezet, making a show of consulting Claparon by going upstairs to the room whence the said Claparon had departed, ensconced in a cab, ten minutes before Théodore appeared.

The two adversaries had spoken, of course, in such a way as not to be overheard, and, as soon as Théodore raised his voice, Cérezet by a gesture gave him to understand that Claparon might be listening to them. The five minutes, during which Théodore heard what sounded like the murmur of two voices over his head, were a period of torture to him, for he was playing with his whole life for the stake. Cérezet came down at last and went to his accomplice with a smile upon his lips, his eyes gleaming with infernal malice, trembling with joy, a perfect Lucifer in good-humor.

"I know nothing about such things myself," he said, with a shrug, "but Claparon knows all about it; he has worked for high-grade bankers, and he began to laugh. 'I suspected as much!' said he. You will have to bring me to-morrow the twenty-five thousand you just offered me, and you'll need as much more to take up your notes, my boy."

"Why so?" demanded Théodore, feeling as if

some internal current of the electric fluid had melted his spinal column.

"The house is ours!"

"How so?"

"Claparon has put in a bid in the name of a contractor, the first creditor who sued him, a little toad named Sauvaignou; Desroches, the attorney, has charge of the case, and you'll receive notice in the morning.—It's a matter of consequence enough to put Claparon, Dutocq, and myself on the lookout for funds.—What would become of me without Claparon? So I've forgiven him,—I forgive him, and, although perhaps you won't believe me, my dear friend, I kissed him! Change your conditions!"

This last phrase was terrible to hear, especially when emphasized by Céribet's face, as he gave himself the pleasure of acting a scene from the *Légataire*, in the midst of his keen study of the Provençal's character.

"Oh! Céribet!" cried Théodore; "and I meant to do so well by you!"

"You see, my dear boy," replied Céribet, "between ourselves, a fellow must have some of this!"

And he struck himself a blow over the heart.

"You haven't any. As soon as you think you've got a twist on us you try to flatten us out.—I rescued you from the vermin and the horrors of hunger! You were dying like an idiot.—We put you in the way to make a fortune, we threw the finest kind of a social skin over your shoulders, and set you down

where there was something to be got—and there you are! Now I know you; we will go armed."

"This is war!" exclaimed Théodore.

"You fired first on me," said Cérizet.

"But if you crush me, adieu to your hopes! and if you don't crush me you have me for your enemy!"

"That's just what I was saying yesterday to Dutocq," replied Cérizet, coldly; "but what would you have? we will choose between the two—we'll act according to circumstances.—I'm a good fellow," he continued after a pause; "bring me your twenty-five thousand francs to-morrow at nine o'clock, and Thuillier may keep the house.—We'll continue to work for you at both ends, and you shall pay us.—After what's happened, my boy, isn't that fair?"

And Cérizet brought his hand down on Théodore's shoulder with a cynicism more dishonoring than ever branding-iron was in the executioner's hands.

"Well, give me till noon," replied the Provençal; "for there's much pulling and tugging to be done, as you would say."

"I'll try to persuade Claparon; he's in a great hurry, is that fellow!"

"Well, until to-morrow," said Théodore, with the air of a man whose mind is made up.

"Good-night, my friend," said Cérizet with a nasal twang that disgraced the most beautiful word in the language.—"There goes a fellow who has got what he deserves; he's a sucker!" he said to himself as he watched Théodore walking along the street like a drunken man.

THÉODOSE AND FLAVIE

"I am at home to nobody!" said Flavie to her maid.

*She closed the doors and returned to Théodore. * * **

"You're nothing but a child!" said she, in a soft voice, running her hand through Théodore's hair as his tears ceased to flow.

"I can see nobody but you in the whole world!" he cried, kissing her hands in a sort of frenzy.

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A. D. 1856. -

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When Théodore was once more in Rue des Postes he walked swiftly toward Madame Colleville's house, intensely excited and talking to himself aloud. The fire of his aroused passions, that sort of internal conflagration with which many Parisians are familiar, for such horrible situations as his are common enough in Paris, excited him to frenzy, and to a pitch of eloquence which a single expression will illustrate. At the corner of Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas, in the little Rue des Deux-Églises, he cried:

"I will kill him!"

"There's a fellow who doesn't seem contented!" said a workman, whose pleasantry soothed the white-hot fury from which Théodore was suffering.

As he left Cérizet it occurred to him that he would make a confidante of Flavie and tell her everything. It is a characteristic of the Southern nature to be strong until assailed by certain passions, when everything falls to pieces. He entered. Flavie was alone in her room; she caught sight of Théodore and thought she was either ravished or dead.

"What's the matter?" she cried.

"The matter is—" he said. "Do you love me, Flavie?"

"Oh! can you doubt it?"

"Do you love me absolutely—even criminally?"

"Has he killed someone?" she said to herself.

She answered with a nod.

Théodore, overjoyed to seize this willow branch, went from his chair to Flavie's couch, and there, floods of tears flowed from his eyes amid sobs that would have made a hardened old judge weep.

"I am at home to nobody!" said Flavie to her maid.

She closed the doors and returned to Théodore, moved as deeply as any mother for her suffering child. She found the child of Provence stretched out on the couch, his head thrown back, and weeping bitterly. He had taken her handkerchief, and when Flavie tried to take it from him it was laden with tears.

"But what is it? what's the matter?" she asked.

Nature, more acute than art, served Théodore's purpose admirably; he was no longer playing a part, he was himself; and the tears, the nervous paroxysm, were his sign-manual to the comedy he had recently acted.

"You're nothing but a child!" said she, in a soft voice, running her hand through Théodore's hair as his tears ceased to flow.

"I can see nobody but you in the whole world!" he cried, kissing her hands in a sort of frenzy, "and if you remain true to me, if you are mine as the body is the soul's, as the soul is the body's," he said, recovering his self-possession and with infinite charm of manner, "why, I shall have courage!"

He rose and began to pace the floor.

"Yes, I will struggle, I will recover my strength,

like Antæus, by embracing my mother! and I will strangle in my hands the serpents that are twined about me, giving me serpents' kisses, leaving their foul slaver on my cheeks, and trying to suck my blood and honor! Oh! poverty!—Ah! how great are they who can remain standing under its weight and hold their heads erect!—I should have allowed myself to die of hunger on my wretched pallet three years and a half ago!—The coffin is a soft bed compared with the life I am leading!—For eighteen months I have been *feeding on bourgeois!*—and just as I am on the point of beginning to lead an upright, happy life, with the prospect of a glorious future; just as I am going forward to take a seat at the social board, the executioner lays his hand on my shoulder—yes, the monster taps me on the shoulder and says: ‘Pay the devil’s tithe, or die!’—And I didn’t crush them!—I didn’t plunge my arm down their throats to their very bowels!—Ah! but I will do it! Look, Flavie, are my eyes dry?—Now, I laugh, I realize my own strength, and my faculties are returning. Oh! tell me that you love me—tell me again! It is to me at this moment like the word: ‘Pardon!’ to the man condemned to death.”

“You are terrible, my dear!” said Flavie; “oh! you have killed me!”

She understood nothing of it all, but she fell on the couch like a dead woman, worn out by the excitement, and thereupon Théodore knelt by her side.

“Forgive me! forgive me!” he said.

“But what is the matter?”

"They are seeking to ruin me. Oh! promise to give me Céleste, and you will see what a lovely life you will share with us!—If you hesitate—why, it means that you will be mine, and I take you!"

He made such an impulsive movement, that Flavie sprang to her feet in dismay and began to walk the floor.

"Oh! my angel! here at your feet.—What a miracle! Surely God is on my side! A ray of light has penetrated my brain. I have a sudden inspiration!—Oh! I thank thee, my good angel, great Théodosius!—thou hast saved me!"

Flavie gazed in admiration at this chameleon-like creature, as with one knee on the floor, his hands folded on his breast and his eyes gazing upward, he repeated a prayer like the most fervent of Catholics, and crossed himself. It was as fine as the communion of Saint-Jérôme.

"Adieu!" said he, with a melancholy expression and accent which would have seduced a saint.

"Oh! leave me my handkerchief," cried Flavie.

Théodore rushed downstairs and into the street like a madman, and hurried away to Thuillier's; but he turned his head, saw Flavie at the window, and waved his hand triumphantly.

"What a man!" she said to herself.

"My good friend," said he in a calm, soft, almost wheedling voice, to Thuillier, "we are in the hands of infernal swindlers; but I propose to give them a little lesson."

"What's the trouble?" said Brigitte.

"Why, they want twenty-five thousand francs, and in order to get the law on their side, the notary or his accomplices have fabricated a bid to beat ours; take five thousand francs with you, Thuillier, and come with me; I'll see that you have the house. I am making implacable enemies!" he cried, "and they'll do their best to kill me morally. But if you refuse to believe their infamous slanders, and don't change to me, that's all I ask. What does it all amount to after all? If I succeed, you'll pay a hundred and twenty-five thousand for the house instead of a hundred and twenty."

"Sha'n't we have it all to do again?" asked Brigitte uneasily, her eyes dilating under the pressure of a horrible suspicion.

"Registered creditors alone have the right to raise our bid, and as this is the only one who has availed himself of the right, we're safe enough. The debt is only two thousand francs, but in such cases we have to pay the attorneys well, and not mind an extra thousand-franc note for the creditor."

"Go and get your hat and gloves, Thuillier," said Brigitte, "and you'll find the money you know where."

"As I let the fifteen thousand francs go to no purpose, I don't care to have any more money pass through my hands. Thuillier shall pay it himself," said Théodore when he was left alone with Brigitte. "You made twenty thousand francs on the bargain I made for you with Grindot, who supposed he was working for the notary; and you have a piece of

property that will be worth nearly a million five years from now. It's a corner on the boulevard!"

Brigitte was ill at ease as she listened, exactly like a cat who feels mice under the floor. She looked Théodore in the eye, and despite the good sense of his observations she conceived doubts.

"What's the matter, little aunt?"

"Oh! I shall be in mortal terror until we are really in possession—"

"You would gladly give twenty thousand francs, wouldn't you," said Théodore, "to feel that Thuillier was what we call the indefeasible proprietor? Well, remember that I have won that amount twice over for you."

"Where are we going?" asked Thuillier.

"To Master Godeschal! we must retain him to act for us—."

"Why, we refused him Céleste's hand!" cried the old maid.

"That's the very reason I'm going to him," replied Théodore; "I have studied him, he's an honorable man and will be glad to do you a service."

Godeschal, Derville's successor, had been chief clerk to Desroches for more than ten years. Théodore, who was aware of that circumstance, heard this name whispered in his ear by an inward voice in the midst of his despair, and he thought he could see a possibility of depriving Claparon of the weapon Céritet was brandishing at him. But, first of all, it was essential to make his way into Desroches'

office, and get some light as to the position of his adversaries. Godeschal alone, by reason of the intimacy subsisting between clerk and employer, could guide him thither.

The attorneys of Paris, when they are connected as Godeschal and Desroches were, live upon really fraternal terms among themselves, and the effect is apparent in the facility with which matters susceptible of amicable adjustment are adjusted. They obtain from one another such reciprocal concessions as are obtainable, by applying the proverb: "*Pass me the rhubarb, and I'll pass you the senna,*" which is put in practice in all the professions, among ministers, in the army, among judges and among business men;—everywhere, in short, where a spirit of hostility has not erected insuperable barriers between the parties.

"I get a very good fee out of this settlement," is an argument which does not need to be expressed in words, for it is implied in the tone, in the look, in the gesture. And, as attorneys are so situated that they are likely to find themselves in the same boat again, the matter is arranged. The counterpoise to this good-fellowship is found in what we must call the *conscience of the profession*. Thus society must believe the physician, who, when called upon to act in a medico-legal capacity, says: "This body contains arsenic;" no selfish consideration can destroy the self-esteem of the actor, the probity of the law-maker, the independence of the public minister. The attorney says good-naturedly: "You never can

obtain that, my client's a madman,'" and the other replies: "Well, we shall see.—"

Now, La Peyrade, a very shrewd young man, had worn his gown at the Palais enough to know to how great an extent the customs of the profession would serve his purposes.

"Stay in the cab," he said to Thuillier when the carriage stopped on Rue Vivienne, where Godeschal had become an employer of clerks on the scene of his first labors as clerk; "you will not appear unless he undertakes the case."

It was eleven o'clock in the evening, and La Peyrade had not miscalculated in hoping to find an attorney of recent creation in his office at that hour.

"To what am I indebted for the advocate's visit?" said Godeschal, as he walked forward to meet La Peyrade.

Strangers, provincials, society folk are perhaps not aware that advocates are to attorneys what generals are to marshals; there is a line of demarcation strictly adhered to between the order of advocates and the society of attorneys. However venerable an attorney may be, however great in his profession, he must call upon the advocate. The attorney is the administrative officer who lays out the plan of campaign, collects supplies, and puts everything in train; the advocate fights the battle. No one knows why the law gives the client two men for one any more than we know why the author must have a printer and a publisher. The order of advocates forbids its members to do any act properly

within the attorney's province. It very rarely happens that a great advocate steps inside an office; they are consulted at the Palais; but, in the world, the barrier ceases to exist, and some advocates, especially those in La Peyrade's position, occasionally condescend to call upon an attorney; but such cases are rare and are almost always justified by the urgency of the matter in hand.

"Mon Dieu," said La Peyrade, "it's quite a serious matter, and there's a question of etiquette involved which we must decide between us. Thuillier is at the door in a cab, and I have come to you, not as an advocate, but as Thuillier's friend. You, and you alone, are in a position to do him a very great service, and I told him that you are too high-souled a man, for you are a worthy successor of the great Derville, not to put all your talents at his service. This is the case."

Having explained, entirely to his own advantage, the trickery which it was necessary to meet with legal skill, for lying clients are more common with attorneys than truthful ones, the advocate sketched his plan of campaign.

"My dear sir, you must call upon Desroches this evening, disclose this plot to him, and get him to promise to send for his client, this Sauvaignou, tomorrow morning; between us three we will put him in the confessional, and if he wants a thousand-franc note over and above his claim, we'll let him have it, to say nothing of five hundred francs for yourself and as much for Desroches, if Thuillier has

Sauvaignou's release at ten o'clock to-morrow.—What does this Sauvaignou want? His money of course! A man of his stamp isn't likely to resist a bait of a thousand francs, even if he is but the tool of some greedy fellow hiding behind him. The discussion between him and those who are working him is of little consequence to us.—Come, help the Thuillier family out of this—”

“I will go to Desroches instantly,” said Godeschal.

“Not until Thuillier has signed a power of attorney and handed you five thousand francs. You must have the money on the table in such cases.”

After a further interview, at which Thuillier was present, La Peyrade put him and Godeschal in a cab, and they drove to Desroches' office on Rue Béthisy, where they dropped Godeschal, La Peyrade saying that they might as well return to Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer by that route: and on the steps at Desroches' door, he made an appointment for the next morning at seven o'clock.

La Peyrade's fortune and his future depended on the result of that conference. So we must not be surprised to learn that he ignored the customs of his order so far as to go to Desroches' office, in order to study Sauvaignou, to take a hand in the fight, notwithstanding the risk he ran in an encounter with the most redoubtable of Paris attorneys.

As he entered and exchanged salutations, he kept his eye on Sauvaignou. He was, as his name seemed to imply, a Marseillais, a contractor for labor, occupying a position, as his title of *marchandeur*

—taskmaster—indicated, between workmen and master-builders to make tenders for the labor on contracts undertaken by the latter. The contractor's profit consists of the difference between the price he pays the *marchandeur* and what he receives from the owner, excluding materials, as only the labor is taken into account.

The master-builder having failed, Sauvaignou had procured a judgment from the Tribunal of Commerce giving him a lien on the property, and had been duly registered as a creditor entitled to overbid. This little affair had put an end to the panic.

Sauvaignou, a short, thickset man, dressed in a gray woolen blouse, with a workman's cap on his head, was sitting in an arm-chair. Three one thousand franc notes lying in front of him on Desroches' desk, told La Peyrade plainly enough that the skirmish had taken place and the attorneys had been beaten. Godeschal's eyes spoke volumes, and the glance that Desroches shot at the poor man's lawyer was like the blow of a pickaxe in a trench. His faculties stimulated by danger, the Provencal was superb; he placed his hand on the notes and folded them to put them in his pocket.

"Thuillier withdraws his offer," he said to Desroches.

"Very good; then we're all agreed," replied the terrible attorney.

"Yes; your client must bring us fifty thousand francs that we've laid out on the property according to the contract between Thuillier and Grindot.

I didn't tell you that yesterday," he said, turning to Godeschal.

"Do you hear that?" said Desroches to Sauvaignou. "That means a lawsuit that I won't undertake without security."

"But, Messieurs," said the taskmaster, "I can't do anything until I've seen the worthy man who handed me five hundred francs on account for signing a bit of a power of attorney."

"Are you from Marseilles?" said La Peyrade to Sauvaignou in patois.

"Oh! if he attacks him in patois, he's lost!" muttered Desroches to Godeschal.

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Well, you poor devil," continued Théodorese, "they mean to ruin you.—Do you know what you must do? Pocket these three thousand francs, and when the other man comes, take your rule and give him a good thrashing; tell him he's a beggar, that he wanted to make a tool of you, that you revoke your power of attorney, and that you'll return his money in the week that has three Thursdays. Then, with the thirty-five hundred francs and your savings, go to Marseilles. And, if anything happens to you, come and see this gentleman,—he'll know where to find me and I'll help you out; for, you see, I am not only a good Provençal, but I am one of the leading advocates of Paris and the friend of the poor—"

When the fellow found a compatriot furnishing him with arguments in support of the reasons

he had for betraying the usurer, he capitulated, but demanded thirty-five hundred francs.

"A good thrashing, said Sauvaignou," when his demand was acceded to, "is well worth that, for it may get me into the police court."

"No, don't hit him unless he says nasty things to you," said La Peyrade; "then it will be self-defence."

When Desroches had confirmed La Peyrade's statement that he was a practising advocate, Sauvaignou signed a release containing a receipt for the principal of his claim with costs and interest; the release was to be executed in duplicate by Thuillier and himself, attended by their respective attorneys, so that the document would finally extinguish the claim.

"We will leave the fifteen hundred francs for you," said La Peyrade in a low tone to Desroches and Godeschal, "but only on condition that you give me the release; I'll take it and have Thuillier sign at his notary, Cardot's; the poor fellow didn't close his eyes last night."

"Very well!" said Desroches.—"You can flatter yourself," he added to Sauvaignou, as he handed him the pen, "on having made fifteen hundred francs very quickly."

"They are surely mine, Monsieur Attorney?" demanded the Marseillais, already ill at ease.

"Oh! yes, quite legitimately," replied Desroches. "But you must notify your man this morning of the revocation of his power of attorney under date of yesterday; go into the office, here, this way—"

Desroches told his chief clerk what was to be done, and bade one of the students see to it that a messenger was at Cérezet's before ten o'clock.

"I am greatly obliged to you, Desroches," said La Peyrade, pressing the attorney's hand; "you think of everything, and I won't forget this service."

"Don't leave the release at Cardot's until the afternoon."

"Look you, my countryman," cried the advocate to Sauvaignou, in the Provençal dialect, "take your Margot to Belleville for the day, and above all things don't go home—"

"I understand," said Sauvaignou; "your hand; till to-morrow!"

"Right you are!" exclaimed La Peyrade, making use of a familiar Provençal phrase.

"There's something behind this," said Desroches to Godeschal, as the advocate was returning from the office to the attorney's private room.

"The Thuilliers have a magnificent estate for nothing," said Godeschal, "that's all."

"La Peyrade and Cérezet remind me of two divers fighting under water.—What shall I say to Cérezet, who employed me in the matter?" Desroches asked the advocate, after making that shrewd comparison to Godeschal in an undertone.

"That your hand was forced by Sauvaignou," replied La Peyrade.

"And have you no fear?" Desroches demanded, point blank.

"Oh! I have something to teach him!"

"I shall know about it to-morrow; there's nobody so talkative as a man who's been whipped," said Desroches to Godeschal.

La Peyrade left them with the release in his pocket. At eleven o'clock he was present at the opening of the justice's court, calm and determined, and as Cérezet came in, pale with rage, he whispered to him:

"My dear boy, I'm a good fellow, too! I still have twenty-five thousand francs in bank notes at your disposal in exchange for all my notes of hand that you hold."

Cérezet glared at the poor man's lawyer, unable to find words to reply; he was fairly green with the bile he was absorbing.

*

"I have an indefeasible title to the property now!" cried Thuillier, returning from Jacquinot's, Cardot's son-in-law. "No human power can steal my house from me. They told me so!"

The bourgeois have much more faith in what a notary says to them than in what an attorney says. The notary is of more importance in their eyes than any other ministerial officer. The average citizen of Paris never calls upon his attorney without a feeling of terror, for the man's belligerent manner and audacity bewilder him, whereas each time that he climbs the stairs to his notary's office, he does so with renewed pleasure, for he admires his sagacity and common sense.

"Cardot, who is on the lookout for a good house, has asked me for one of the apartments on the second floor," he continued; "if I wish he will introduce to me on Sunday a tenant who proposes to take a lease of the whole property for eighteen years at forty thousand francs, he to pay the taxes. What do you say to it, Brigitte?"

"We must wait," she replied. "Ah! our dear Théodore gave me a pretty scare!"

"Nonsense, my dear! Why, do you know, Cardot asked me who put me in the way of this trade, and told me I ought to make him a present of ten thousand francs at least. In truth, I owe him everything!"

"Well, he's the child of the house," replied Brigitte.

"Poor fellow, to do him justice he never asks for anything."

"Well, my good friend," said La Peyrade, when he returned from the magistrate's at three o'clock, "now you're the richest of the rich!"

"All through you, my dear Théodore—"

"And have you come back to life, dear aunt?—Ah! you weren't half as frightened as I was.—I put your interests before my own. I tell you, I didn't breathe freely until eleven o'clock this forenoon; and now I am sure of having at my heels two mortal enemies in the two people I have deceived for your sake. As I was coming home I was wondering at your influence over me which led me to commit this—I might almost say crime! and whether the joy of being one of your family, of becoming your child, will wipe out the stain I can see upon my conscience."

"Bah! you can tell it to your confessor," said Thuillier, the skeptic.

"Now," said Théodore to Brigitte, "you can safely pay the price of the house, eighty thousand francs, and the thirty thousand to Grindot,—a hundred and twenty thousand in all, including costs and expenses,—and this last twenty thousand makes a hundred and forty. If you let the whole to one tenant, demand the last year's rent in advance, and reserve the whole first-floor above the entresol for my wife and myself. You can get forty thousand a year for twelve years on those conditions. If you

choose to leave this quarter for the neighborhood of the Chamber, there'll be plenty of room for you with us on that huge first-floor, which has stable and carriage-house and everything necessary for a life of grandeur. And now, Thuillier, I propose to get the cross of the Legion of Honor for you!"

At this last stroke, Brigitte cried:

"Faith, my boy, you have looked after our business so well, that I leave the letting of the house to you."

"Don't abdicate, my dear aunt," said Théodore, "and God keep me from taking a step without you! you are the good genius of the family. I was just thinking of the day when Thuillier enters the Chamber. You'll be in receipt of forty thousand francs two months from now. And that won't prevent Thuillier from getting his ten thousand at the end of the first quarter."

Having tossed this hope to the old maid, who was in high spirits, he led Thuillier into the garden, and said to him without beating about the bush:

"My good friend, find an excuse for asking your sister for ten thousand francs, but don't let her suspect that they are for me; tell her that amount is necessary for use in the department to secure your appointment as Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, and that you know how to distribute it and to whom."

"That will do," said Thuillier; "I'll pay it back to her out of the rent."

"Have the money to-night, my good friend; I am

going out now to see about your Cross, and to-morrow we shall know what to depend on."

"What a man you are!" cried Thuillier.

"The ministry of the first of March is going by the board, and we must get that much out of it," rejoined Théodore, with a knowing look.

He hurried to Madame Colleville's, and said to her as he went in:

"I have won; we shall have for Céleste a piece of real estate worth a million, the reversion of which will be assured to her by Thuillier in the contract; but we must keep the secret or all the peers in France will be after your daughter. However, that provision will be made only in my favor. Now I want you to dress and go to Madame la Comtesse du Bruel; she can get the Cross for Thuillier. While you are putting on your war paint I'll go and pay my court to Céleste a bit; then we can talk in the carriage."

La Peyrade had seen Céleste and Félix Phellion talking together in the salon. Flavie had such entire confidence in her daughter that she had left her with the young professor. After his great triumph of the morning Théodore felt that it was time for him to begin to pay his addresses to Céleste. The hour for making trouble between the lovers had arrived, and he did not scruple to put his ear to the door of the salon before going in, so that he might know what letter they had reached in the alphabet of love; and he was invited, so to speak, to commit this domestic crime by sundry bursts of loud talking,

which seemed to mean that they were quarreling. Love, according to one of our poets, is the privilege two people accord each other of mutually tormenting each other about nothing.

Once Félix was chosen by her heart to be her companion for life, Céleste desired not so much to study him as to be one with him in that communion of hearts which is the beginning of all affection, and which, in young people, leads instinctively to scrutiny. The quarrel to which Théodore was preparing to listen had its source in a serious disagreement that had taken place between Céleste and the mathematician several days before.

The young girl, who was the moral product of the years when Madame Colleville was trying to repent of her sins, was sincerely pious; her piety was deep-seated; she belonged to the flock of the truly faithful, and in her character, absolute Catholicism, tempered by the mysticism which is so attractive to youthful hearts, was a sort of inborn poesy, a life within a life. Starting from that point, young women grow up to be extremely frivolous or saints. But, during that lovely period of their youth, they have a touch of absolutism in their hearts; in their thoughts they have always before their eyes the image of perfection, and everything must be celestial, angelic or divine. Outside of their ideal, nothing exists; all is filth and corruption. This idea leads many girls to look with scorn upon diamonds of the first water, who, as women grown, adore paste.

Now, Céleste had come to realize that Félix was not irreligious, but indifferent, in religious matters. Like the majority of geometricians, chemists, mathematicians and great naturalists, he had subjected religion to the test of argument: he recognized therein a problem as insoluble as that of squaring the circle. A deist *in petto*, he adhered to the religion of the majority of Frenchmen without attaching more importance to it than does the new law hatched in July. There must be a God in heaven just as there must be a bust of the king on a pedestal at the mayor's office. Félix Phellion, a worthy son of his father, had never spread the slightest veil over his conscience; with the absent-mindedness of a solver of problems he allowed Céleste to read what was written there; and the maiden confused the religious question with the civil question; she professed a profound horror of atheism, and her confessor told her that the deist is the cousin-german of the atheist.

"Have you thought about doing what you promised, Félix?" said Céleste, as soon as Madame Collerville left them alone.

"No, my dear Céleste," replied Felix.

"Oh! to think of breaking your promise!" she cried gently.

"It would be a profanation," said Félix. "I love you so dearly and my affection is so weak when opposed to your wishes, that I promised something contrary to my conscience. Conscience, Céleste, is our treasure, our strength, our mainstay. How

can you wish me to go to church and kneel at the feet of a priest in whom I can see only a man?—You would have despised me if I had obeyed you."

"And so you do not intend to go to church?" said Céleste, with a tearful glance at the man she loved. "If I were your wife you would let me go to church alone?—You don't love me as I love you!—for even now I have in my heart a feeling for an atheist contrary to what God would have me entertain."

"An atheist!" cried Félix. "Oh! no. Listen to me, Céleste.—There certainly is a God; I believe in Him, but I have higher ideas concerning Him than your priests have; I don't pull Him down to my level, but I try to raise myself to His. I listen to the voice He has placed within me, which honest men call conscience, and I try not to obscure the divine rays which come to me. Therefore I shall never injure anyone and I shall never do aught contrary to the teachings of the world-wide moral law,—which was the moral law of Confucius, of Moses, of Pythagoras, of Socrates, as well as of Jesus Christ. I shall stand erect in God's presence; my acts will be my prayers; I shall never lie, my word will be sacred, and I shall never do anything base or mean. Such are the precepts I learned from my virtuous father, and I wish to bequeath them to my children. All the good I can do I will do, though I must suffer thereby. What more can you ask of a man?"

This profession of faith caused Céleste to shake her head with a pained expression.

"Read the *Imitations of Jesus Christ* carefully," said she.—"Try to become a convert to the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church, and you will see how absurd your words are. Listen, Félix; marriage is not, in the eye of the Church, a matter of a day, or entered into for the mere gratification of our desires; it is for eternity.—What! we are to be together night and day, we are to be one flesh, one voice, and yet we shall have in our hearts two languages, two religions, a perpetual cause of discord! You would condemn me to shed tears for the state of your soul, and to hide them from you; could I appeal to God, when I saw His laws constantly invoked against you? Your deistic blood and your convictions might be inherited by my children!—Oh! my God! what wretchedness to undergo for a husband! No, such thoughts are intolerable.—O Félix! be of my faith, for I cannot be of yours! Do not place a gulf between us. If you loved me, you would have read the *Imitation of Jesus Christ* before this."

The Phellions, true offspring of the *Constitutionnel*, were not fond of the priestly mind. Félix was imprudent enough to reply to this prayer from the depths of a loving heart:

"You are simply repeating a lesson you have learned from your confessor, Céleste, and nothing is so fatal to happiness, believe me, as the interference of priests in family affairs."

"Oh!" cried Céleste, indignantly, for love alone had inspired her words, "you do not love me!—The voice of my heart does not go to yours! You didn't

understand me, for you didn't listen to me, and I forgive you, for you know not what you say."

She enveloped herself in haughty silence, and Félix went and drummed on the window with his fingers: familiar music to those who are absorbed by bitter thoughts. Félix, in truth, proceeded to propound to himself these nice and curious questions suggested by the Phellion conscience:

"Céleste is a wealthy heiress, and if I yield to her ideas, disregarding the voice of natural religion, I should be influenced by the prospect of an advantageous marriage: an infamous deed. As father of a family I could not allow priests to have the least influence in my house; if I yield to-day, I am guilty of a weakness which will be followed by many others equally disastrous to a father's and husband's authority. All this is unbefitting a philosopher."

He returned to his beloved.

"Céleste, I implore you on my knees, let us not mingle what the law in its wisdom has separated. We live for two worlds, society and heaven. Let every man seek salvation in his own way; but, as far as society is concerned, do we not obey God when we observe its laws? Christ said: 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.' Cæsar is the political world. Let us forget this trifling dispute!"

"A trifling dispute!" cried the young enthusiast. "I wish you to have all my heart as I wish to have all yours, and you divide it in two!—Is not that misfortune? You forget that marriage is a sacrament."

"Your black gowns have turned your head!" exclaimed the mathematician, testily.

"Monsieur Phellion, you have said enough upon that subject," interposed Céleste, sharply.

At this juncture Théodore deemed it expedient to make his appearance on the scene, and found Céleste very pale and the young professor as anxious as any lover who has just angered his mistress.

"I heard the word *enough!*—That meant that there was too much, I suppose?" he said, looking inquiringly from Céleste to Félix.

"We were talking of religion," Félix replied, "and I was saying to Mademoiselle what a wretched thing outside religious influence is in a family."

"That's not the question, Monsieur," said Céleste, sharply, "but whether a husband and wife can have but one heart when one is an atheist and the other a Catholic."

"Can it be that there are such things as atheists?" cried Théodore, feigning profound amazement. "Can a Catholic marry a Protestant? Why, there is no possible salvation for husband and wife except in perfect accord in religious matters!—I,—to be sure, I am from the Comtat, and belong to a family that numbers a pope among its ancestors, for our crest is a *silver key gules*, and we have for supporters a monk holding up a church and a pilgrim with a golden staff, with the device: *I open and I close*—I am absolutely ferocious on the subject. But to-day, thanks to the modern system of education,

it doesn't seem extraordinary to agitate such questions!—Why, I have said that I wouldn't marry a Protestant, no matter how many millions she might have,—not even if I loved her to distraction! Faith isn't a matter to be discussed. *Una fides, unus Dominus*, is my political motto."

"You hear!" cried Céleste, with a triumphant glance at Félix.

"I am no devotee," continued La Peyrade; "I go to mass at six in the morning, when no one sees me; I fast on Fridays; I am, in short, a son of the Church, and I would not enter upon any serious undertaking without first offering up a prayer, according to the old custom of our ancestors. No one notices my religion.—In the Revolution of 1789 something happened in my family which bound us all more closely than ever to our Holy Mother Church. A poor girl belonging to the elder branch of the La Peyrades, who own the little estate of La Peyrade,—for we are Peyrades des Canquoëlls, but the two branches inherit from each other,—well, this young woman married, six years before the Revolution, an advocate who was, as the fashion was among advocates in those days, a Voltairean, that is to say, a doubter, a deist if you choose. He chimed in with the Revolutionary ideas and abounded in the pretty conceits you've heard about the worship of the Goddess Reason and the rest. He came into our province saturated with the Convention, a perfect fanatic. His wife was very beautiful and he compelled her to play the rôle of Liberty; the poor

creature went mad.—She died a madwoman!—Well, in these days, we can see a repetition of 1793."

This fable, invented on the spur of the moment, made so deep an impression upon Céleste's fresh, young imagination, that she rose, bowed to the young men and withdrew to her own room.

"Ah! Monsieur, what did you say to her?" cried Félix, struck to the heart by the cold glance Céleste darted at him with an affectation of profound indifference. "She thinks she is already transformed into the Goddess of Reason."

"What was the trouble, pray?" Théodore asked.

"My indifference in religious matters."

"The great curse of the age," rejoined Théodore, solemnly.

"Here I am," said Madame Colleville, as she entered the room, dressed with great taste. "But what's happened to my poor daughter? she's crying—"

"She's crying, Madame!" cried Félix; "tell her that I'll begin studying the *Imitation of Jesus Christ* at once."

He went down stairs with Théodore and Flavie, the advocate pressing Flavie's arm to imply that he would explain the young scholar's dementia when they were in the cab.

An hour later, Colleville, Madame Colleville, Céleste and Théodore arrived at the Thuilliers' to dinner. Théodore and Flavie took Thuillier into the garden, and Théodore said to him:

"My good friend, you shall have the Cross in a

week. Our dear friend here will tell you about our call on Madame la Comtesse du Bruel—”

He abruptly broke off and left Thuillier, as he saw Mademoiselle Thuillier escorting Desroches into the garden; he went to meet the attorney with a horrible presentiment that made his blood run cold.

“My dear master,” said Desroches in his ear, “I come to see if you can get hold of twenty-five thousand francs and twenty-six hundred and eighty francs sixty centimes costs.”

“You are Céritet’s attorney?”—cried the advocate.

“He has handed the papers to Louchard and you know what you have to expect, after an arrest. Is Céritet mistaken in thinking that you have twenty-five thousand francs in your desk? You offered them to him and it’s quite natural for him not to let you keep them—”

“I thank you for what you have done, my dear master,” said Théodore; “I anticipated this attack.”

“Between ourselves,” replied Desroches, “you fooled him in great style. The rascal won’t stop at anything to revenge himself, for if you choose to throw your gown to the dogs and go to prison, he loses everything—”

“I go to prison!” cried Théodore; “I’ll pay!—But there are five more acceptances for five thousand each; what does he mean to do with them?”

“Oh! after this morning, I can’t tell you anything; but my client is a shrewd, mangy dog, and he has his little schemes—”

"Tell me, Desroches," said La Peyrade, putting his hand on the thin, gaunt attorney's shoulder, "you still have the notes, haven't you?"

"Do you mean to pay?"

"Yes; in three hours."

"All right; be at my office at nine o'clock; I'll take your money and hand you the notes; but at half-past nine they'll be in Louchard's hands."

"Very well, this evening at nine."

"At nine," assented Desroches, whose keen glance embraced the whole family assembled in the garden.

Céleste, red-eyed, was talking with her godmother, Colleville and Brigitte, Flavie and Thuillier, on the broad steps leading up from the garden to the hall.

"You can well afford to take up your notes," said Desroches to Théodore, as he escorted him to the door.

At a single glance Desroches understood the advocate's vast projects.

The next morning at daybreak Théodore called upon the costermongers' banker to see the effect produced upon his enemy by the payment of his notes punctually at the time appointed on the previous evening, and to make one more attempt to rid himself of the gadfly.

He found Cérezet standing, in consultation with a woman, and received from him an imperative command to remain at a distance and not interrupt their interview. The advocate was therefore reduced to conjecture as to what the woman's business could

be, for its importance was clearly indicated by the usurer's thoughtful expression. Théodore had a presentiment, extremely vague to be sure, that the conference would have some effect upon Cérizet's plans, for he saw in his countenance the complete transformation produced by hope.

"But, dear Mother Cardinal—"

"Yes, my good man—"

"What do you want?"

"We must make up our minds—"

Such beginning or ends of sentences were the only rays of light that this animated conversation, carried on in low tones, mouth to ear and ear to mouth, cast upon the motionless witness, whose attention was concentrated on Madame Cardinal.

Madame Cardinal was one of Cérizet's first customers, a fishhawker. Parisians may be familiar with this class of creatures, peculiar to their soil, but foreigners do not suspect their existence, and Mère Cardinal, as she was technically called, was deserving of the interest she aroused in the advocate's mind. One meets so many women of her stamp in the streets that the passer-by pays little more heed to them than to the three thousand pictures of an exposition. But, in this digression, La Cardinal has all the interest of a masterpiece hanging by itself, for she was a perfect type of her species.

She stood upon muddy wooden clogs; but her feet were carefully enveloped in socks, and were further protected by stout milled stockings. Her calico

dress, enriched with a flounce of mud, bore the marks of the strap that held her fishbasket, diagonally across her short back. Her principal garment was a shawl of the variety known as *rabbit's skin cashmere*, the ends of which were tied above her *tournure*,—we must employ the word current in fashionable society, to describe the effect produced by the impression of the strap across her skirts, which rose in the shape of a cabbage. A piece of coarse cotton, worn as a neckerchief, left bare a red neck, seamed like the basin of La Villette after people have been skating there. Her head-dress was a yellow silk handkerchief, twisted pictur-esqueuly.

Short and stout was Mère Cardinal, and of a rich coloring that suggested a glass of eau-de-vie in the morning. She had been beautiful. The Market reproached her, in its boldly metaphorical speech, of having more than once turned night into day. Her voice, in order to meet the requirements of ordinary conversation, was obliged to compress its volume as one does in a sick-room; but then it issued thick and muffled from a palate accustomed to shout the names of the fish she had for sale at each season so that she could be heard in the loftiest attics. Her nose à la Roxelane, her well-shaped mouth, her blue eyes, all that had once contributed to make her beautiful were swallowed up in layers of healthy fat which told of a life passed in the open air. Her stomach and bosom were noticeable for their Rubens-like amplitude.

"Do you want me to lie on straw?" she said to Cérizet.—"What do I care for the Toupilliers? Ain't I a Toupillier?—Where do you want to put the Toupilliers?"

This fierce outbreak was repressed by Cérizet with a prolonged *hush!* of the sort that all conspirators heed.

"Well, go and see what it amounts to and come back," said Cérizet, edging her toward the door, where he whispered a word or two in her ear.

"Well, my dear friend," said Théodore, "you have your money?"

"Yes," was the reply; "we have measured our claws, and they are of equal length and strength and toughness.—What next?"

"Shall I tell Dutocq that you received twenty-five thousand francs yesterday?"

"Oh! my dear friend, not a word—if you love me!" cried Cérizet.

"Look you," retorted Théodore, "I must know once for all what you want. I have definitely made up my mind that I will not remain twenty-four hours more on the gridiron where you have placed me. It is a matter of perfect indifference to me how much you gull Dutocq; but I propose that you and I shall have an understanding. Twenty-five thousand francs is a fortune to you, for you must have made ten thousand in your business,—and it's enough to make you an honest man. Cérizet, if you will let me alone, if you won't interfere with my marrying Mademoiselle Colleville, I shall get to be something

like king's advocate in Paris; you couldn't do better than make sure of a protector in that direction."

"Here are my conditions, and they're not to be discussed; you can accept them or not. You see that I have the Thuillier house as principal tenant on an eighteen years' lease, and I will hand you one of the other five notes discharged. You won't find me in your way any more and you can arrange about the four others with Dutocq. You will have got rid of me, and Dutocq isn't strong enough to fight with you—"

"I agree if you will pay forty-eight thousand francs a year for the house, the last year in advance, and let the rent begin in October next."

"All right, but I'll only pay forty-three thousand in cash; your note makes up the forty-eight. I have seen the house and looked it over and it suits me."

"One last condition," said Théodore: "you will assist me against Dutocq?"

"No," replied Cérizet, "you've cooked him quite enough, without my sticking the larding-pin into him; he'd lose all his juice. We must be reasonable. The poor devil doesn't know how he is to pay the last fifteen thousand francs on the price of his clerkship, and it's enough for you to know that you can take up your notes for fifteen thousand."

"Well, give me a fortnight to get your lease for you."

"Not longer than till next Monday! On Tuesday your note for five thousand will be in Louchard's

hands, unless you pay it or Thuillier agrees to give me the lease, by Monday."

"Very well, Monday it is!" said Théodore. "Are we friends?"

"We shall be Monday," replied Cérizet.

"All right, until Monday; will you pay for my dinner?" said Théodore, laughingly.

"Yes, at the *Rocher de Cancale* if I get the lease. Dutocq will be there and we'll have some sport. It's a long time since I laughed."

Théodore and Cérizet exchanged a grasp of the hand, and the words:

"I'll see you again soon!"

*:

Cérezet had not allowed himself to be so promptly appeased without cause. In the first place, as Desroches said: "Bile doesn't facilitate business," and the usurer was too sensible of the wisdom of the remark not to make up his mind in cold blood to make the most of his situation, and *strangle*, the technical word, the shrewd young Provençal.

"You have your revenge to take," said Desroches, "and you've got that young fellow. Be sure and extract his quintessence."

In the last ten years Cérezet had seen more than one man enriched by carrying on the trade of principal tenant. The principal tenant is to the owner of buildings in Paris what the farmer is to the owner of estates in the country. All Paris has seen one of its most famous tailors building a most magnificent structure at his own expense on the celebrated Frascati property, and paying fifty thousand a year rent therefor as principal tenant, the building to belong to the owner of the land at the expiration of a nineteen-years' lease. Despite the expense of construction, which was something like seven hundred thousand francs, the net profits of the lease were very handsome.

Cérezet, on the watch for business opportunities, reckoned up the chances of profit offered by the location of the building *stolen* by Thuillier, as he told

Desroches, and was satisfied that he could sublet it for more than sixty thousand francs at the end of six years. It had four shops, two in each front, and occupied a corner lot on the boulevard.

Cérezet hoped to make at least twelve thousand a year for twelve years, without reckoning the possibilities, the premiums paid at each renewal of a lease by the tradesmen who had established a good business there, to whom he would not give leases for a longer term than six years at first. He proposed to sell the good will of his usury office to the Widow Poiret and Cadenet for twelve thousand francs, and as he already had more than thirty thousand he was possessed of the means of paying the year's rent in advance which landlords are accustomed to demand, as security, from principal tenants. Cérezet therefore had passed a very happy night; his sleep was one long dream in which he fancied himself in a fair way to adopt an honest business, and to become a good citizen like Thuillier and Minard and many others.

He abandoned all thought of the house in process of construction on Rue Geoffroy-Marie. But he had an awakening which he did not expect; he found Fortune standing beside him in the person of Madame Cardinal, and pouring forth gifts upon him in abundance from her horn of plenty.

He had always treated this woman with consideration, and had promised her, for a year or more, the necessary funds to purchase a donkey and a little cart, so that she might carry on her business on a

large scale, and go from Paris into the suburbs. Madame Cardinal was the widow of one of the pillars of the Market, and she had an only daughter, whose beauty was much vaunted to Céritet by other gossips. Olympe Cardinal was about thirteen years old when Céritet began to loan money in the quarter, in 1837, and he showed the greatest attention to La Cardinal, to serve his own base ends; he raised her out of the depths of want, hoping to make Olympe his mistress; but, in 1838, the girl left her mother, and was doubtless *making her living*, to use the phrase with which the common people of Paris describe the misuse of the precious gifts of nature and youth.

To look for a girl in Paris is like looking for a sole in the Seine; one can simply take the chance of a lucky cast of the net. This lucky cast had been made. Mère Cardinal, who had entertained one of her lady friends by taking her to the Bobino Theatre, had recognized her daughter in the "leading lady" whom the "first" comic had had under his protection for three years. The mother was flattered at first to see the heiress in a lovely, spangled gown, with her hair dressed like a duchess's, open-work stockings and satin shoes, and to hear the shouts of applause that greeted her when she appeared; but she ended by shouting to her from her seat:

"You shall hear from me, you murderer of your mother!—I'll find out if dirty strollers have any right to ruin girls of sixteen!"

She undertook to watch for her daughter when she

left the theatre, but the leading lady and the first comic must have leaped over the footlights and have gone out with the spectators, instead of by the stage-door where the Widow Cardinal and *Mère Mahoudeau*, her good friend, made an infernal uproar which two municipal guards pacified. Those august functionaries, in obedience to whom the two women lowered the pitch of their voices, called the mother's attention to the fact that at sixteen her daughter was old enough to go on the stage, and that, instead of shrieking at the door for the manager, she could summon him before the justice of the peace or the police court, as she chose.

The next morning Madame Cardinal was intending to consult Céribet, having in view the fact that he was employed by the justice of the peace; but before she had started for his den on Rue des Poules, she was struck dumb by the concierge of the house where old Toupillier, her uncle, lived; he had not two days to live, being in the last stages of consumption, so the man told her.

"Well, what do you want me to do?" the widow inquired.

"We count on you, dear Madame Cardinal; you won't forget us for the good advice we give you. Here's the way it is: just lately your poor uncle, being as he couldn't move, trusted me to collect the rents of his house, Rue Notre-Dame de Nazareth, and the back money on a certificate he has on the Treasury for eighteen hundred francs a year."

From that instant the Widow Cardinal's eyes, which had been wandering vaguely around, became fixed.

"Yes, my dear," continued Master Perrache, the little lame concierge; "and, seeing that you're the only one that ever thought of him, and took him fish now and then, you may find he's done the handsome thing by you.—My wife's been looking out for him latterly and sitting up with him; she mentioned you to him, but he wouldn't let her tell you he was sick.—You see it's high time for you to show yourself. Dame, it's near two months since he did any business."

"Come, my old leather-scratcher," said Mère Cardinal to the concierge, a shoemaker by trade, as they hurried off to Rue Honoré-Chevalier, where her uncle dwelt in a filthy attic, "you'll agree that the hair might have grown long on my hand before I'd have imagined that!—What! My uncle Toupillier rich!—Oh! the honest pauper of Saint-Sulpice!"

"Ah!" rejoined the concierge, "he looked out for himself all right,—he went to bed every night with his good friend, a big bottle of Roussillon. My wife has tasted it; but he told us it was six-franc wine. He got it at the wine-shop on Rue des Canettes."

"Don't blab about this, my boy," said the widow, as she parted from her informant, "I'll look after you,—if there's anything in it."

This Toupillier, once a drum-major in the Garde-Française, had entered the service of the Church

two years before 1789, becoming verger at Saint-Sulpice. The Revolution deprived him of his job, and he became horribly poor. He was thereupon compelled to take up the profession of a model, for he *enjoyed* a fine physique.

When the religion was rehabilitated he resumed his staff; but he was dismissed in 1816, as much on account of his bad moral character as of his political opinions; he was supposed to be a Bonapartist. However, as a compensation, he was allowed to stand at the door, where he distributed holy water. Later, a scandalous affair, whereof we shall have a word to say anon, deprived him of his sprinkler; but he found still another method of attaching himself to the sanctuary and obtained leave to sit at the church door in the capacity of a pauper. At this period, rich in the memories of the seventy-two years he had lived, he laid claim to ninety-six, and began the rôle of centenarian.

In all Paris it was impossible to find such a beard and such hair as Toupillier's. He was bent almost double as he walked, holding a staff in one trembling hand, covered with lichen like that that grows upon granite, and in the other his classic, soiled and patched broad-brimmed hat, wherein alms fell plentifully. His legs, encased in ragged bandages, terminated in horribly dilapidated shoes of coarse matting, within which he filled, however, excellent horse-hair soles. He smeared his face with various compounds which simulated the marks left by severe maladies, blotches and seams, and he counterfeited

the senility of the centenarian to admiration. He had been one hundred years old since 1830, and he was in fact eighty. He was the dean of the church poor, the master of the square, and all those who came to beg beneath the arches of the church, out of reach of the police agents, and under the protection of the verger, the beadle, the dispenser of holy water and the parish, paid him a sort of tithe.

When an heiress or a bridegroom or a godfather would say, as they left the church: "Here's something for all of you, and don't annoy anybody," Toupillier, indicated by his successor in the vergership, would pocket three-fourths of the gratuities and give only one-fourth to his acolytes, from whom he exacted as tribute a sou a day. Money and wine were his two great passions; but he kept the second under control and surrendered unconditionally to the first, without neglecting his comfort. He drank at night after dinner, when the church was closed; he slept for twenty years in the arms of drunkenness, his last mistress.

In the morning, at dawn, he was at his post with all his properties. From that time until dinner, which he took at Père Lathuile's, made famous by Charlet, he gnawed crusts of bread for nourishment and he gnawed them most artistically in a way that brought him alms galore. The verger and the dispenser of holy water, with whom he had an understanding perhaps, used to say of him:

"He's the church pauper; he knew Languet the curé, who built Saint-Sulpice; he was verger twenty

years both before and after the Revolution; he's a hundred years old."

This little biography, familiar to good churchmen, was the best of all advertisements and in all Paris no hat was passed with more satisfactory results. He bought his house in 1826 and his *rentes* in 1830.

Judging from the value of the two properties, his receipts must have amounted to six thousand francs a year and must have been invested in some usurious business like Cérezet's, for the house cost forty thousand francs and the *rentes* forty-eight thousand. His niece, who was thoroughly hoodwinked by her uncle, as were the concierges, the petty church functionaries and the charitable pious folk, believed him to be in greater want than herself, and when she had any fish that were a little tainted she would carry them to the poor man.

She deemed herself fully entitled, therefore, to reap what advantage she could from her liberality and her compassion for her uncle, who was sure to have a multitude of collateral relations who were strangers to her, for she was the third and last Toupillier girl; she had four brothers, and her father, who drove a hand-cart, used to talk to her in her childhood of three aunts and four uncles, all of whom had the oddest of careers.

After she had seen the sick man she went off at a gallop to consult Cérezet and told him about finding her daughter, and detailed the arguments for and against the idea that her uncle had a heap of gold concealed in his wretched bed. Mère Cardinal

did not feel quite sure enough of her position to seize upon the succession legally or illegally, and she went to Cérizet intending to abide by his advice.

The petty usurer, like the men who work in sewers, had at last found a diamond in the slime he had been wallowing in for four years, espousing therein one of those lucky chances which are sometimes met with, so they say, in the faubourgs, where heirs to great estates have been seen in clogs. This was the secret of his good humor with the man whose ruin he had sworn to accomplish. We can imagine his anxiety as he awaited the return of the Widow Cardinal, to whom the crafty deviser of shady schemes had imparted the means of verifying her suspicions as to the existence of the treasure, promising her complete success if she chose to entrust to him the task of garnering the harvest. He was not the man to recoil before a crime, especially when he saw an opportunity to induce somebody else to commit it, while he himself reaped all the benefit to be derived from it. Then he would buy the house on Rue Geoffroy-Marie, and he could see himself already a Parisian bourgeois, a capitalist in a position to undertake great business enterprises.

"My Benjamin," said the fishvender, approaching Cérizet with features inflamed by greed no less than by the swift pace at which she had come, "my uncle's lying on more than a hundred thousand francs in gold!—and I know that the Perraches have

spotted the stuff while they've been pretending to take care of him."

"Cut up among forty heirs," said Cérezet, "that fortune wouldn't give each one a very big slice. Look here, Mère Cardinal, I'm going to marry your daughter: give her your uncle's gold, and you can have the *rente* and the house for life."

"Don't we run any risk?"

"None at all."

"Done," said Madame Cardinal, grasping her future son-in-law's hand. "Six thousand a year: that's not bad!"

"And a son-in-law like me, you know!" added Cérezet.

"I'll be an honest citizeness of Paris!" cried La Cardinal.

"Now," continued Cérezet, after a pause, during which the son-in-law and mother-in-law embraced, "I must go and look over the ground. Don't you leave the place again; you must tell the concierge you're waiting for a doctor. I'll be the doctor and you pretend not to know me."

"You're a sly villain!" said Mère Cardinal, giving him a friendly tap on the chest by way of adieu.

An hour afterward, Cérezet, dressed entirely in black, disguised by a red beard and a countenance of artistic workmanship, arrived at Rue Honoré-Chevalier in a regulation turnout. He asked the cobbler-concierge to direct him to the lodging of a poor man named Toupillier.

"Is Monsieur the doctor expected by Madame Cardinal?" the concierge asked.

Céribet had reflected, no doubt, upon the serious character of the part he had undertaken, for he evaded a direct reply.

"Is this the way?" he said, walking at random toward one side of the court-yard.

"No, Monsieur," Perrache replied, and he led him to a servant's staircase leading to the attic occupied by the pauper.

The inquisitive concierge was reduced to the necessity of questioning the cab driver, and we will leave him pursuing investigations in that direction.

The house in which Toussaint lived is one of those which are likely to lose half their depth when the streets are laid out according to the new plan, for Rue Honoré-Chevalier is one of the narrowest in the whole Saint-Sulpice quarter. The owner, being prohibited by law from building additional stories or repairing, was compelled to let the barrack in the condition in which it was when he purchased it. The street front was excessively ugly. The structure consisted of a first-floor and attics above the ground-floor, and a little square building on either side. The courtyard ended in a garden, well stocked with trees, which was let with the first-floor. This garden, which was separated from the courtyard by an iron fence, would have made it possible for a wealthy proprietor to sell the house to the municipality and rebuild it on the courtyard site; but the whole first-floor was let on an eighteen-years' lease.

to a mysterious personage, concerning whom neither the official presumption of the concierge nor the curiosity of the other tenants had been able to glean a morsel of information to feed upon.

This tenant, who was then sixty-six years old, had, in 1829, put up a staircase to the rear window of the house looking on the garden, so that he could go down and walk there without passing through the court-yard. The left-hand half of the ground-floor was occupied by a bookstitcher who had made the carriage-houses and stables over into workshops ten years before, and the other half by a bookbinder. Each of these tenants occupied half of the attic-floor upon the street. The attics above one of the ells in the rear formed part of the quarters of the mysterious tenant. Lastly, Toupillier paid a hundred francs for the garret above the little ell at the left, reached by a staircase which had only a borrowed light. The porte cochère was in a circular recess, indispensable in a narrow street where two carriages can not pass each other.

Céribet seized a cord which served as a rail and climbed the sort of ladder leading to the room where the centenarian was dying; in that room the ghastly spectacle of simulated misery awaited him.

In Paris, everything that is done for an express purpose is wonderfully successful. In this respect the pauper is as clever as the shopkeeper in arranging his show-cases, as the pretended rich man seeking to obtain credit.

The floor had never been swept; the tiles were

invisible beneath heaps of litter of all sorts, filth, dust, dried mud and everything that Toupillier had thrown there. A wretched iron stove, whose funnel led into a gap in a condemned chimney, was the most prominent article of furniture in the disgusting den; at the back of an alcove was placed the tent-bed, with green serge valances and head-curtains which the worms had made into lace. The window, almost obscured, had a coating of filth upon the panes which made curtains unnecessary. The whitewashed walls presented a smoke-dried appearance due to the charcoal and peat the poor man burned in his stove. On the mantel-piece were two bottles, a chipped water-pitcher and a cracked plate. A wretched worm-eaten commode contained his linen and clean clothes. The other furniture consisted of a light stand of the commonest sort, a table worth forty sous, and two kitchen chairs almost destitute of straw. The centenarian's picturesque costume was hanging on a nail, and on the floor beneath it the shapeless pieces of matting that he used as shoes; his illusive staff and his hat formed a sort of canopy of poverty.

As he entered the room, Cérezet's keen glance took in every detail of the old man's appearance. His head was resting on a pillow brown with dirt, without a cover, and his angular profile, like those which the engravers of the last century delighted to make with landscapes with frowning cliffs, was outlined in black against the green background of the curtains. Toupillier, who was nearly six feet high,

was staring fixedly at an imaginary object at the foot of his bed; he did not move when he heard the groaning of the heavy door, sheathed with iron and furnished with a stout lock, which secured his domicile against intrusion.

"Is he conscious?" queried Cérizet, as La Cardinal fell back before him, for she did not recognize him until he spoke.

"Almost," said she.

"Come out on the staircase, so that he can't hear us," said Cérizet. "This is what we must do," he said in his future mother-in-law's ear. "He is weak, but his face doesn't look bad, and we have a good week before us. I'll go and get the kind of a doctor that we want, and I'll come back one of these nights with six poppy-heads. In the state he's in some poppy tea will put him in a sound sleep. I'll send you a cot-bed on the pretext of fixing things for you to pass the nights with him. When he's asleep we'll change him from the green bed to the cot, and when we have found out how much the precious old thing contains, why, we sha'n't lack means of carting it off. The doctor'll tell us if he's in condition to live a few days, and above all things to make a will."

"My son!—"

"But we must find who lives in this barrack; the Perraches may give the alarm and every tenant's a possible spy."

"Bah! I know already," rejoined Madame Cardinal, "that the first-floor tenant, Monsieur du Portail,

a little old fellow, is taking care of a madwoman; I heard an old Flemish woman named Katt call her Lydie this morning." (See *Splendors and Miseries*.) "His only servant, named Bruno, is another old fellow like himself, and does everything but cook."

"But the bookbinder and the stitcher are at work early in the morning. However, we must look round," he added, like a man who has no definite plan formed. "I'll go to the mayor's office in your arrondissement meanwhile, and get the certificate of Olympe's birth and get ready for the banns to be published. We'll be married next Saturday week!"

"How he goes on! how he goes on! the beggar!" said Mère Cardinal, nudging this redoubtable son-in-law with her shoulder.

As he went down, Cérezet was surprised to see the little old man, Du Portail, walking in the garden with one of the most important personages in the government, Comte Martial de la Roche-Hugon. He remained in the courtyard, scrutinizing the old house, which was built under Louis XIV., and whose yellow walls, although of hewn stone, seemed to stoop like old Toupillier. He looked into the two shops and counted the workmen. The place was as silent as a cloister. Finding that he was watched himself, Cérezet went away, reflecting on the difficulty of getting hold of the money hidden by the dying man, although there was but little on top of it.

"Could we take it away at night?" he muttered; "the concierges are on the watch, and in the daytime we should be seen by twenty people. It's no easy

matter to carry twenty-five thousand francs in gold on one's person."

Societies may theoretically become perfect under two forms; the first is a state of civilization in which morality, being equally distributed to all, does not admit even the idea of crime; the Jesuits attained that sublime condition, first presented by the primitive Church; the second is another state of civilization in which the surveillance of the citizens by one another makes crime impossible. The form of perfection sought to be attained by modern society is that wherein wrong-doing encounters so many obstacles that one must shut one's ears to reason before trying to commit it. Indeed, no one of the iniquitous deeds which the law does not reach really goes unpunished, and the judgment of society is more severe than that of the courts. Let a man suppress an unwitnessed will, as was done by Minoret, postmaster at Nemours, and the crime is hunted down by the spies of virtue as a theft is hunted down by the police. No indelicacy passes unnoticed, and wherever there is a bruise the mark is ineradicable. Nor can inanimate things be put out of sight any more readily than men, for, especially in Paris, objects are carefully numbered, houses guarded, and streets and squares watched. To live at ease, crime needs some sanction like that enjoyed by members of the Bourse, or like that afforded by Cérezet's clients, who never complained, and who would have trembled not to find their flayer in his kitchen on a Tuesday.

"Well, my dear sir," said the concierge, going to meet Cérizet, "how is the poor man, God's friend?"

"I'm no doctor," replied Cérizet, by no means inclined to undertake the rôle; "I am Madame Cardinal's man of business; I just advised her to have a bed made up so that she can be on hand, day and night, to look after her uncle; but perhaps he'll need a nurse."

"I can nurse him," said Madame Perrache; "I've nursed women through their lying-in."

"Well, we'll see," said Cérizet; "I'll arrange about that. Who's the tenant of your first floor?"

"Monsieur du Portail.—Oh! he's been living here for thirty years; he has an annuity, Monsieur, and he's a very respectable old party. Men who have annuities, you know, live on their income. He used to be in business. Eleven years now he's been trying to cure one of his friends' daughters, Mademoiselle Lydie de la Peyrade, of insanity. She's well taken care of, I tell you, by two of the biggest doctors in Paris, and they had a consultation this very morning. But, so far, nothing seems to do her any good, and they even have to keep a close watch on her, for sometimes she gets up at night—"

"Mademoiselle Lydie de la Peyrade!" cried Cérizet; "are you quite sure of the name?"

"Madame Katt, her companion, who does what little cooking they have to do, has told me so a thousand times, although she nor Monsieur Bruno, the servant, don't talk much as a general thing. It's

like talking to the wall to try to get anything out of them. We've been here for twenty years, and we haven't ever found out anything about Monsieur du Portail. You see, my dear man, he owns the little house alongside; do you see that inside door? Well, he can go in and out as he pleases and have people come to see him through there without me knowing anything about it. Our landlord isn't any further ahead than we are, so far as that goes; when anyone rings at the little door Monsieur Bruno answers the bell—”

“So you didn't see the gentleman go in that the old mystery-monger's talking with now?”

“Faith! no.”

“She must be Théodore's uncle's daughter,” said Céritet to himself, as he returned to his cab. “I wonder if this Du Portail can be the unknown preserver who sent my rascal twenty-five hundred francs some time ago?—Suppose I should send the old fellow an anonymous letter, telling him of the danger our worthy advocate is in, all on account of certain notes for twenty-five thousand francs?”

An hour later a cot-bed with all its appurtenances arrived for Madame Cardinal, to whom the inquisitive portress offered her services in the way of supplying her with food.

“Do you want to see Monsieur le Curé?” Mère Cardinal asked her uncle. She had noticed that the arrival of the bed seemed to rouse him from his somnolent condition.

“I want wine!” replied the miser.

"How do you feel, Père Toupillier?" queried Madame Perrache, in her most wheedling tones.

"I tell you I want wine!" repeated the old fellow with a persistence and energy which were hardly to be expected from one in his weak state.

"We don't know if it's good for you, *nunkie*," said La Cardinal, soothingly; "we must wait and see what the doctor says."

"Doctor! I won't have a doctor," cried Toupillier, "and what are you doing here? I don't need anyone."

"Dear uncle, I came to find out if there wasn't something that 'ud tickle your appetite; I've got some nice fresh sole: eh? a bit o' sole with a slice of lemon?"

"Nice stuff your fish is," replied Toupillier; "rotten's no name for it! The last you brought me, six weeks ago and more, is still in the cupboard; you can take it back."

"God! these sick people are ungrateful!" said La Cardinal in an undertone to Dame Perrache.

At the same time, to show her solicitude, she shook up the pillow under the sick man's head.

"There, *nunkie*; ain't that better?"

"Let me alone," growled Toupillier, wrathfully, "I want to be alone; give me some wine and leave me in peace!"

"Don't get mad, little uncle; we're going to find the wine for you."

"Six francs the bottle, Rue des Canettes!" cried the miser.

"All right," rejoined Mère Cardinal; "but let me see what change I've got. I want to stock your cellar handsome. An uncle's a second father, you know, and we mustn't stick at trifles for him!"

As she spoke she sat down on one of the dilapidated chairs, with her legs spread apart, and emptied all the contents of her pockets into her apron; a knife, her snuff-box, two Mont-de-Pieté tickets, crusts of bread, and a quantity of small change, in which she finally found a few silver coins.

This exhibition, which was intended as a demonstration of the most open-hearted, impulsive devotion, had no effect. Toupillier did not even appear to have noticed it. Exhausted by the feverish energy with which he had demanded his favorite remedy, he made an effort to change his position, and with his back turned to his two nurses, having again muttered: "Wine! wine!" he made no further sound save the stertorous respiration which indicated that the chest was beginning to fill.

"Still, I suppose I must go there and get his wine!" said La Cardinal, sulkily, replacing in her pockets the cargo she had taken therefrom.

"If you don't want to put yourself out, Mère Cardinal?"—suggested Dame Perrache, still eager to offer her services.

The fishwoman hesitated a moment; but, upon reflection, it occurred to her that she might possibly learn something from a conversation with the wine-shop keeper, and, so long as Toupillier was lying on

his treasure, there was no objection to leaving the concierge alone with him.

"Thank you, Madame Perrache," said she; "it's just as well for me to know the people he trades with."

Having found behind the light stand a dirty bottle which would hold a good two litres, she said:

"It's Rue des Canettes, ain't it?"

"Corner of Rue Guisarde," replied Dame Perrache, "Legrelu, a tall, good-looking man with big whiskers and no hair."

Then lowering her voice she said: "his six-franc wine, you know, is *first* Roussillon. The wine-shop man's all right, though; it will be enough for you just to tell him that you come for his customer, the poor man of Saint-Sulpice."

"I don't need to be told a thing twice," replied La Cardinal, opening the door, and making a pretence of going.—"By the way," said she, coming back,—"what the devil does he burn in his stove, if there's any medicine to be heated?"

"Dame," replied the concierge, "he hasn't laid in his winter stock yet; and here in the middle of summer—"

"And not so much as a saucepan! not a pot!" continued La Cardinal; "good God! what house-keeping! I'd like something to bring provisions home in: for it's a shame to have everybody see what you bring from the market."

"I can lend you a market basket," said the concierge, still eager and officious.

"Thank'ee, I'll buy a basket," replied the fish-woman, thinking more about what there might be to take away from the miser's abode than about what there was to be taken thither. "Ain't there an Auvergnat somewhere about here?" she added.

"At the corner of Rue Férou, you'll find what you want: a fine place where they have painted logs on the outside of the shop, so natural you'd think they were going to speak to you."

"I see it from here," said Madame Cardinal.

Before taking her final departure she indulged in a bit of most profound hypocrisy. We have seen how she hesitated to leave the concierge alone with the invalid.

"Madame Perrache," said she, "don't leave the dear man until I get back!"

*

The reader will have noticed that Cérezet had not adopted a very decided course in the affair he had undertaken. The rôle of physician, which he had at first thought of assuming, eventually frightened him, and he represented himself to the Perraches as his accomplice's man of business. As soon as he was alone he considered the matter more carefully, and saw that his plan, involving the presence of a doctor, a nurse and a notary, was surrounded by most serious difficulties. A regularly executed will in Madame Cardinal's favor was not a thing to be procured on the spur of the moment. It would take a long while to accustom the miser's stubborn, suspicious mind to the idea, and death was lurking there, and could defeat the most skilful preparations with a turn of his hand.

As to repeating the famous scene from Regnard's *Légataire*, how dream of such a thing amid the subtleties of a police organization and a civilization, which seem to think of nothing but depriving the drama and the novel of what little vivifying air is still left for them to breathe!

Of course, if the idea of inducing the dying man to make a will was abandoned, the eighteen hundred francs a year in the public funds and the house on Rue Notre-Dame de Nazareth must be left to the

heirs-at-law; and Madame Cardinal, for whom it had been their scheme to obtain a direct bequest of those two things, would simply come in for her share in the succession: but to abandon that visible portion of the inheritance was the surest way to appropriate the hidden portion. Moreover, when that was once safely housed, what was there to prevent their returning to the matter of the will?

Thus reducing the *operation* to much simpler terms, Cérezet restricted it to the device of the poppy-heads, of which he had already spoken, and, provided with no other implement of war than that, he was returning to Toupillier's to give Madame Cardinal fresh instructions, when he met her, with the basket she had just purchased on her arm; in the basket was the sick man's panacea.

"Well, well," said the usurer, "is this the way you stay at your post?"

"I had to go out and buy some wine. He cried like a crazy man to be left in peace; he wanted to be alone and wanted his drink! The critter's got the idea in his head that prime Roussillon is the best thing for him. I'll swell his belly! when he's *slewed* perhaps he won't be so uneasy."

"You're right," said Cérezet, sententiously. "We must never gainsay sick people; but we must fix the wine, you know: by making an infusion of these"—and he lifted one of the lids of the basket and slipped in the poppy-heads—"you will give the poor old man five or six hours' good sound sleep; I'll come and see you this evening, and then I don't

think there'll be anything to prevent our looking into the size of the inheritance a bit."

"I see!" said Madame Cardinal, with a wink.

"Till to-night, then!" said the usurer, and the interview came to an end.

He felt that he had engaged in a difficult, ugly affair, and he did not care to be seen on the street talking with his confederate.

When she returned to the pauper's garret, she found him still in the same lethargic state; she dismissed Madame Perrache, and went to the door to get a bundle of sawed wood she had ordered from the Auvergnat on Rue Férou.

In an earthen saucepan with which she had provided herself, and which fitted the opening in the upper part of the stove, commonly used by the poor for the teakettle, she placed the poppy-heads swimming in the two-thirds of the wine she had brought, and kindled a hot fire underneath, so as to obtain the desired decoction as soon as possible. The crackling of the wood, and the heat which soon made itself felt in the room aroused Toupillier from his stupor.

"Fire here!" he cried when he saw that there was a fire in the stove; "do you want to burn the house down?"

"But it's wood I bought with my own money, *nunkie*, to warm your wine. The doctor doesn't want you to drink it cold."

"Where is the wine?" demanded Toupillier, somewhat soothed to find that the culinary operations were not being carried on at his expense.

"Must let it come to a boil," replied the nurse; "the doctor said we must be sure about that. But if you'll be good I'll give you half a glass cold just to wet your whistle. I'll take the risk if you won't tell!"

"I don't want your doctors; they're a pack of rascals trying to kill everybody off!" cried Toupillier, roused to renewed life by the prospect of having something to drink. "Well, where's the wine?" he added, in the tone of a man whose patience was exhausted.

Feeling sure that, even if it did no harm to oblige him, it could do no good, La Cardinal filled a glass half full, and handed it to the sick man with one hand while with the other she raised him to a sitting position, so that he could drink.

With his lean, eager fingers Toupillier snatched the glass and absorbed its contents at a single draught.

"That's fine for a taste!" he said, "but there was water in it!"

"Ah! you mustn't say that, *nunkie!* I went and got it myself at Père Legrelu's, and I gave it to you just as it came; but let the other simmer; the doctor said we could give you some when you're thirsty."

Toupillier resigned himself to his fate with a shrug, and after fifteen minutes, the decoction being then in a state to be administered, La Cardinal, without further appeal, carried him a glass filled to the brim.

The avidity with which the old man drank did not

permit him to detect at first that the wine had been tampered with; but at the last swallow he noticed a nasty sickening taste, and threw the glass down on the bed, crying out that she was trying to poison him.

"Ah, yes! this is how much poison there is in it," retorted the fishwife, inverting the glass so that what was left in the bottom dropped into her mouth; thereupon she declared that if the wine tasted differently to the old man, it was because his mouth was *bad*.

At the close of this discussion, which lasted some little time, the narcotic began to work, and within an hour the invalid was in a heavy sleep.

In her enforced idleness while awaiting Cérizet, La Cardinal had a brilliant idea: it occurred to her that, in order to facilitate all the going and coming that might be necessary when the time had arrived to carry away the treasure, it would be well to moderate the watchfulness of the Perraches. Consequently, having first taken the precaution to throw away the poppy-heads, she called the female concierge, and said to her:

"Come and taste *his* wine, Mère Perrache! Wouldn't you 'a' thought *he* was all right to guzzle a cask of it? And here after one glass he's had enough!"

"Your health," said the concierge, clinking glasses with La Cardinal, who was careful to honor the toast in undocrored wine.

Being a less accomplished gourmand than the

pauper, Madame Perrache failed to detect in the insidious beverage, which she drank cold, any taste which might lead her to suspect its narcotic powers; on the contrary, she declared that it was like *velvet*, and regretted that her husband was not there to get his share of the spoil.

After chatting together for some time, the two gossips separated; whereupon, with the sausages she had purchased and the remains of the Roussillon, Madame Cardinal made a hearty meal, which she topped off with a nap. Without reckoning the excitement of the day, the influence of one of the headiest wines in the world would sufficiently explain the soundness and duration of her siesta; when she awoke night was beginning to fall.

Her first thought was to cast a glance at the sick bed. The invalid was sleeping restlessly and dreaming aloud.

"Diamonds!" he cried, "diamonds? When I'm dead! not before!"

"Hoity-toity!" said Madame Cardinal; "that's the only thing we need now—that he should have diamonds—"

She saw that Toupillier was in the clutches of an ugly nightmare, and, instead of relieving him by helping him to change his position, she leaned over his head in order not to lose a word, hoping to glean some important revelation.

At that moment a sharp tap at the door, from which the thoughtful nurse had been careful to take the key, announced Cérezet's coming.

"Well?" said he, as he entered.

"He took the drug. For a good four hours he's been sleeping like a Jesus. Just now he was talking about diamonds in his dreams."

"Damnation!" said Céritet, "there'd be nothing surprising about it if we should find some. These paupers, when they set about getting rich, get hold of everything."

"Look here! my boy," said La Cardinal, "what the devil made you go and tell Mère Perrache you were my man of business, and that you ain't in the medical way? We agreed this morning that you was to come here as a doctor."

Céritet did not choose to admit that the assumption of that title seemed to him fraught with danger; he was afraid of discouraging his accomplice.

"I saw the woman was preparing to consult me professionally," he said, "and I took that way of getting rid of her."

"Well, well!" said La Cardinal, "great minds think alike; that was my little game, too, to turn the thing off that way; seeing a man of business come here seemed to give Madame Leather-scratcher something to chew over. Did the Perraches see you come in?"

"I thought the woman seemed to be asleep in her chair," Céritet replied.

"Well she may," rejoined La Cardinal, significantly.

"Really?" queried Céritet.

"Parbleu!" said the fishwoman, "when there's

enough for one, there's enough for two; I made her take all there was left."

"The husband's on deck," said Cérizet, "for he looked up from his cobbling to give me a gracious nod of recognition I could very well have done without."

Just wait till it's dark, then, and we'll play him a trick that'll make him see sparks."

A quarter of an hour later, with a nerve that moved the usurer to admiration, the fishvender regaled the gullible concierge with a fairy story about a *monsieur* who did not want her to show him out and whom she insisted on rivaling in courtesy. As she was going through the form of escorting the imaginary doctor to the street door, she pretended that the wind had blown out her light, and while she was trying to relight it she put out Perrache's. All this fuss, accompanied with exclamations and deafening chatter, was so cleverly managed, that if he had been summoned before the court the concierge would not have hesitated to declare on oath that the doctor, of whose arrival he was personally cognizant, had come down from the pauper's quarters and left the house between nine and ten o'clock.

When the two confederates were thus left in peaceful possession of the theatre of their operations, La Cardinal unwittingly took the part of Béranger, and, as if she were seeking to conceal the amours of a Lisette, she arranged her rabbit skin shawl like a curtain before the window, in order to prevent any prying neighbor from seeing any part of the scene that was in preparation.

In the Luxembourg quarter day ends at an early hour, and, just before ten o'clock, all sounds, within as well as without the house, had almost entirely ceased. A neighbor, deeply interested in a serial romance, held the conspirators in check for some time; but as soon as he had placed the extinguisher over his candle, Cérizet gave the signal for setting about their task. If they should begin without delay, they could have more confidence that the sleeper would remain under the influence of the narcotic; and, furthermore, if the search for the treasure did not occupy much time, there would be no reason why La Cardinal should not have the street door opened on the pretext that she must go to the druggist's for some medicine imperatively required by a change for the worse in the invalid's condition. They might well hope that the Perraches, after the custom of concierges aroused from their first sleep, would simply pull the cord without rising. Cérizet could then go out with his accomplice, and they could put part of the booty in safe keeping on their first trip. It would be easy to invent some way of taking care of the balance during the following day.

Strong as he was at the council board, Cérizet's physical strength was decidedly inadequate, and, except for the assistance of the robust Madame Cardinal, he would never have succeeded in lifting from his bed what might be called the corpse of the ex-drum-major. In his deathly sleep, completely unconscious, Toupillier was simply an inert mass which luckily could be moved about without many

precautions. Endowed with renewed strength by her greed, the athletic fishwoman, notwithstanding the very slight assistance rendered by her man of business, succeeded in accomplishing the trans-shipment of her uncle without accident, and the bed was at last given over to her eager investigations.

At first they found nothing, and La Cardinal, being pressed to explain how she had satisfied herself in the morning that her uncle was lying upon *a hundred thousand francs in gold*, was forced to confess that a conversation with the Perraches and her own vivid imagination were almost entirely responsible for her pretended certainty. Céribet was beside himself: to have passed the whole day nursing the thought and the hope of a fortune, to have decided to attempt a hazardous and compromising step, and, after all, to find himself face to face with nothing! The disappointment was so cruel that, if he had not feared that he might get the worst of an encounter with the muscular force of his future stepmother, he would have taken extreme measures with her in his rage.

However, he vented his wrath in words. La Cardinal made no other reply to the harsh tongue-lashing she received than to say that all hope was not lost, and with a confidence that would have moved mountains, she went on overhauling the bed from end to end, and finally set about emptying the wretched pallet which she had explored so thoroughly on the outside to no purpose; but Céribet would not give his consent to that extreme measure,

reminding her that after she had concluded her autopsy of the mattress, a quantity of broken straw would remain on the floor and might arouse suspicion.

To avoid self-reproach thereafter, La Cardinal, despite the opposition of Cérizet, who thought it an absurd thing to do, determined to remove the corded bottom of the bed; and her faculties must have been tremendously sharpened by the excitement of the search, for, as she raised the wooden frame, she heard the sound of some small object falling on the floor.

Attaching to this incident, which nobody else would have noticed, an importance that nothing seemed to justify, the ardent explorer at once seized the light, and, after fumbling about for some time in the filth of every description which lay deep upon the floor, she at last put her hand upon a small piece of polished iron, half an inch long, the use whereof was utterly inexplicable to her.

"It's a key!" cried Cérizet, who had walked to her side with an indifferent air, but whose imagination at once set off at a gallop.

"Aha! you see!" exclaimed La Cardinal, triumphantly; "but what can this thing open?" she added, thoughtfully; "a doll's wardrobe?"

"Not at all," Cérizet replied; "it's a modern invention, and big locks are worked with little tools like that."

As he spoke he took in with a swift glance everything the room contained in the way of furniture,

went to the commode and pulled out all the drawers, looked into the stove and the table drawer; but nowhere was there any semblance of a lock that that key would fit.

Suddenly La Cardinal had an inspiration.

"Wait!" said she; "I saw that the old shark never once took his eyes off the wall in front of him when he was lying in bed."

"A cupboard hidden in the wall? that isn't impossible," said Cérizet, excitedly seizing the light.

After scrutinizing with great care the door of the recess which was opposite the head of the bed, he could see nothing there but a vast network of dust and spiders' webs.

He thereupon resorted to the sense of touch, which goes more to the root of things, and began to sound and tap the wall in all directions. He found at last that, for a limited space around the spot on which Toupillier had kept his eyes fixed, the wall gave forth a hollow sound, and that in that spot he was striking upon wood. He thereupon rubbed the place violently with his handkerchief rolled into a ball, and beneath the layer of dust he removed he speedily discovered a strip of oak hermetically sealed in the wall: at one side of the board he spied a small round hole, which proved to be that of the lock for which the key was made.

While Cérizet was turning the bolt which worked very smoothly, La Cardinal, pale and gasping for breath, held the light; but, O cruel disappointment! when the cupboard was opened nothing was to be

seen save an empty space, which the candle hastily thrust in by the fishvender lighted up to no purpose.

While this infuriated Bacchante uttered shrieks of despair and addressed her beloved uncle by all the most abusive epithets one can imagine, Cérezet retained his self-possession.

Having thrust his arm into the opening and felt the back and sides, he exclaimed:

"An iron cupboard!" and in the next breath he added, testily: "Give me a light for God's sake, Madame Cardinal!"

As the candle did not cast a satisfactory light into the place he wished to explore, he pulled it out of the neck of the bottle in which La Cardinal had stuck it in default of a candlestick, and, taking it in his hand, passed it carefully along every portion of the iron-walled cavity whose existence they had discovered.

"No keyhole!" he exclaimed, after a minute examination; "there must be a secret lock."

"What a swindler the old hunks is!" said Madame Cardinal, while Cérezet was passing his bony fingers over every inch of the surface.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I've got it!" after feeling and tapping for more than half an hour.

Meanwhile, Madame Cardinal was hovering between life and death, as it were.

Under the constant pressure to which it was exposed, the iron plate suddenly went up into the wall, and amid a mass of gold tossed haphazard into a cavity of considerable size which was thus exposed

to view, lay a red morocco jewel-case, which, by its size, aroused hopes of a magnificent booty.

"I take the diamonds for Olympe's *dot*," said Cérizet, looking at the reflection of his face in the superb jewels contained in the case. "You wouldn't know how to dispose of them, Mother: I leave you the gold for your share. As for the *rentes* and the house, they're not worth the struggle we should have to induce the good man to make a new will."

"Wait a bit, my boy!" retorted La Cardinal, inclined to rebel at this somewhat summary division of the spoil, "we'll count the cash first."

"Hush!" said Cérizet, as if listening.

"What is it?" asked La Cardinal.

"Didn't you hear something moving below?"

"I didn't hear nothing," replied the fishwoman.

Cérizet motioned to her to be silent, and listened more attentively.

"I hear footsteps on the stairs," said he, a moment later.

And he hastily replaced the jewel-case in the cupboard and tried to pull down the sliding panel.

While he was wasting his strength in fruitless efforts the steps came nearer.

"Yes, some one's coming up!" said La Cardinal, in dismay. "Bah! perhaps it's the madwoman," she added, clutching at a straw of hope; "they say she walks 'round at nights."

CÉRIZET AND LA CARDINAL

While Cérizet was turning the bolt, which worked very smoothly, La Cardinal, pale and gasping for breath, held the light; but, O cruel disappointment! when the cupboard was opened nothing was to be seen save an empty space, which the candle hastily thrust in by the fishvender lighted up to no purpose.

* * * * *

Having thrust his arm into the opening and felt the back and sides, he exclaimed:

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R de los Pinos cont.

*

At all events, the madwoman had a key to the room, for a key was inserted in the lock the next minute. With a rapid glance, La Cardinal measured the distance that separated her from the door; would she have time to run and throw the bolt? But, considering that she would probably be too late, she hastily blew out the light, in order to have some chance of escape under cover of the darkness.

Vain precaution! The marplot who entered the room had a lighted candle in his hand.

When she saw that she had to do with a little old man of mean aspect, Madame Cardinal, with fire in her eye, rushed forward to meet the new-comer like a lioness in danger of having her little ones stolen from her.

"Calm yourself, my good woman," said the old man, with a cunning leer; "I have sent for the police and they'll be here in a moment."

The word *police* broke Madame Cardinal's legs, to use a slang expression.

"The police, Monsieur!" she exclaimed, greatly agitated; "we ain't thieves!"

"If I were in your place I wouldn't wait for them, all the same," said the old man; "they sometimes make embarrassing mistakes."

"Can I cut sticks, then?" asked the fishwoman incredulously.

"Yes, when you've put back anything that may have wandered into your pockets, *by accident.*"

"Oh! kind sir, there's nothing in my hands or in my pockets; I didn't come here for no harm; I only came to take care of my poor cherub of an uncle; search me."

"Come, vamoose, it's all right!" said the little old man.

The fishwoman did not wait to be told twice, but went swiftly down the stairs.

Cérezet seemed much inclined to take the same course.

"As to you, Monsieur, it's a different matter," the old man said to him; "we must have a little talk together; but if you are tractable everything can be amicably arranged."

Whether the effect of the narcotic had passed away, or the unusual noise around Touppillier's bed had put an end to his sleep,—at all events he opened his eyes and looked about with the expression of a man trying to collect his thoughts; but, after a little, seeing that his precious cupboard was open, his emotion gave him strength to shout two or three times loud enough to wake the whole house: "Thieves! thieves!"

"No, Touppillier," said the little old man, "you haven't been robbed; I came in time, and nothing has been disturbed."

"Why don't you have that beggar arrested!" cried the miser, pointing to Cérezet.

"Monsieur isn't a thief," replied the old man;

"*on the contrary*, he's a friend who came up with me to lend me a hand."

He turned to Cérezet.

"I think, my dear sir," he said, in an undertone, "that we shall do well to postpone the interview I wish to have with you. To-morrow at ten o'clock, at Monsieur du Portail's, in the house adjoining. After what has taken place to-night, I ought to warn you that it may be made somewhat unpleasant for you if you don't keep this appointment; I should find you beyond any question, for I have the honor of knowing who you are; you are the man whom the opposition journals long called 'the courageous Cérezet'."

Despite the biting sarcasm of this reminder, Cérezet, finding that he would not be treated more harshly than Madame Cardinal had been, was only too well pleased with this conclusion, and lost no time in taking to his heels after promising to keep the appointment punctually.

The next morning Cérezet was on hand at the appointed hour.

Having first been identified through a wicket, as he declined to give his name, he was admitted to the house and immediately ushered into Monsieur du Portail's study, where he found that gentleman engaged in writing.

Without rising, the little old man motioned his visitor to a seat, and continued the letter he had begun. After he had sealed it with a solicitude as to the perfect impression of the seal which would

lead one to imagine either that he was naturally very neat and fussy, or that he had had diplomatic experience, Du Portail rang for Bruno, his valet, and said, as he handed him the letter:

"For the justice of the peace of this arrondissement."

He then carefully wiped the steel pen he had been using and arranged symmetrically all the articles that lay in disorder about his desk; not till all these trifling details were duly attended to did he turn to Cérizet.

"You know that we lost poor Monsieur Toupillier last night?" he said.

"No, truly," replied Cérizet, with the most sympathetic expression he could command; "you are the first to tell me of it, Monsieur."

"You ought at least to have suspected it; when one gives a dying man an enormous bowl of hot wine,—which had probably been narcotized in addition, for the Perrache woman lay all night in a lethargic state after drinking a small glass of it,—it seems clear that there is a purpose to hasten the catastrophe."

"I have no idea, Monsieur," said Cérizet, with dignity, "what Madame Cardinal may have given her uncle. I have been guilty, no doubt, of the folly of helping the woman in the *preservative* care she thought it her duty to bestow on an inheritance in which she gave me to understand that she had vested rights; but as for making an attempt on the old man's life, why I am incapable of such

a thing and no such thought ever entered my mind."

"Did you write me this letter?" demanded Du Portail, abruptly, taking a paper from under a paper-weight of Bohemian glass, and handing it to his interlocutor.

"This letter?" replied Cérezet, with the hesitation of a man who does not know whether he had better lie or confess.

"I am sure of what I say," continued Du Portail; "I have a mania for autographs and I have one of yours, which I added to my collection when opposition had raised you to the exalted position of a martyr; I have compared this writing with it, and I say that you are the man who advised me yesterday, by this writing, of young La Peyrade's pecuniary embarrassment at this moment."

"Knowing that you had with you a Mademoiselle de la Peyrade, who must be Théodore's cousin," said the denizen of Rue des Poules, "I fancied that I had discovered in you the unknown protector, from whom my friend has more than once received most generous assistance; as I am very fond of the poor fellow, I ventured in his interest—"

"You did well," interrupted Du Portail. "I am delighted to have fallen in with one of La Peyrade's friends. Indeed I will not conceal from you that it was the fact that you are his friend that was chiefly instrumental in protecting you last night. But what do these notes for twenty-five thousand francs mean? Is our friend in a bad way? Is he dissipated?"

"On the contrary," replied Cérizet, "he's a down-right Puritan. In the exaltation of his piety, he wouldn't take any other clients, as an advocate, than poor people. However, he's on the point of making a wealthy marriage."

"Ah! he's to be married: to whom?"

"I believe it's a girl named Colleville, daughter of the mayor's secretary of the twelfth. She has no fortune in her own right, but one Monsieur ThUILIER, her godfather, member of the General Council of the Seine, has promised to give her a suitable *dot*."

"Who has managed the affair?"

"La Peyrade has been very devoted to the ThUILIER family: he was introduced to them by Monsieur Dutocq, clerk to the justice of the peace of the district."

"But you write me that these notes are held by this Monsieur Dutocq. Is it some marriage-brokerage business?"

"There may be something of that sort in it," replied Cérizet. "You know, Monsieur, that such transactions are common enough in Paris: even ecclesiastics do not disdain to take a hand in them."

"Has the affair gone very far?"

"Why, yes, matters have progressed very rapidly, especially during the last few days."

"Well, my dear sir, I rely upon you to make it fall through; I have other plans for Théodore, another match to suggest to him."

"If you'll allow me!" replied Cérizet; "the way

to put an end to his marriage is to make it impossible for him to pay his debt; and I have the honor to remind you that these notes of hand are genuine obligations. Monsieur Dutocq is clerk to a magistrate; that is to say, in such matters it isn't easy to get the better of him."

"You must buy Monsieur Dutocq's claim," rejoined Du Portail; "you will find a way to come to an understanding with him on the subject. In case of need, if Théodore should kick too violently against my plans, the notes would become a valuable weapon in our hands; you must undertake to sue them in your own name, and you will be put to no inconvenience whatever; I will agree to pay the principal sum and costs."

"You're a downright man of business, Monsieur!" said Cézinet, "and it's really a pleasure to act for you. When you consider that the time has arrived to explain the mission which you do me the honor to think of entrusting to me—"

"You were speaking just now," rejoined Du Portail, "of Théodore's cousin, Mademoiselle Lydie de la Peyrade. That young woman, who is no longer in her first youth, for she is approaching thirty, is the natural daughter of the famous Mademoiselle Beaumesnil of the Théâtre-Français, and La Peyrade, Commissioner of Police under the Empire, and our friend's uncle." (See *Splendors and Miseries*.) "Up to the very moment of his death, which came very suddenly and left his daughter, whom he loved to adoration and had acknowledged, entirely

penniless, I was on most intimate and friendly terms with that excellent man."

Well pleased to show that he had some knowledge of Du Portail's household, Cérezet interposed:

"And you have most devoutly discharged the obligations imposed upon you by that friendship, Monsieur; for when you received the interesting orphan under your roof, you undertook a laborious guardianship; Mademoiselle de la Peyrade's state of health, as I am informed, requires most watchful attention no less than affectionate care."

"Yes," replied Du Portail, "the poor child was so cruelly bereaved by her father's death, that her mind was somewhat affected; but there has been of late a marked improvement in her condition, and no longer ago than yesterday I procured a consultation between Doctor Bianchon, and the chief physicians at Bicêtre and La Salpêtrière. These gentlemen are unanimously of the opinion that marriage and the birth of a child will infallibly lead to her complete recovery; you understand that that is too simple and too agreeable a remedy not to be tried."

"In that case," said Cérezet, "Mademoiselle Lydie de la Peyrade is the wife you have in mind for Théodore?"

"You have said it," assented Du Portail; "but you mustn't think that I should require of our young friend a devotion entirely without recompense if he should fall in with my views. Lydie is good looking, she is talented and has a charming disposition, and will be able to give her husband an important

position in public affairs; moreover, she has a pretty little fortune consisting of something that her mother left her and all that I possess, which I intend to promise her in the marriage-contract, in default of heirs of my own; and lastly, of an inheritance of considerable value which became hers only last night."

"What!" cried Cérizet, "did old Toupillier—"

"By a will in his own handwriting, which I have here, the miser makes her his sole legatee. So you see I am entitled to some credit for not taking any steps in consequence of your escapade and Madame Cardinal's, for it was our property that you proposed to pillage."

"God knows," said Cérizet, "that I don't pretend to excuse Madame Cardinal's vagaries: and yet as one of the next of kin, disinherited for a stranger, it seems to me that she had some claim to the indulgence you were good enough to show her."

"That's where you are wrong," replied Du Portail, "for the apparent liberality of which Mademoiselle de la Peyrade is the object, is restitution, pure and simple."

"Restitution?" exclaimed Cérizet, curiously.

"Restitution," repeated Du Portail, "and nothing is more easily susceptible of proof. Do you remember a diamond robbery committed some twelve years ago, of which one of our dramatic celebrities was the victim?"

"Yes, indeed," Cérizet replied; "I was manager of one of *my* newspapers at the time, and I prepared

the item in *Paris News*. But one moment! the celebrity you speak of was Mademoiselle Beaumesnil."

"Exactly: Mademoiselle Lydie de la Peyrade's mother."

"So this wretched Toupillier—but no, I remember, the thief was convicted. His name was Charles Crochard. It was whispered that he was the natural son of a great personage, Comte Granville, Attorney-General at Paris after the Restoration." (See *A Double Family*.)

"Well," continued Du Portail, "this is what actually happened. The theft, you will also remember, was committed in a house on Rue de Tournon occupied by Mademoiselle Beaumesnil. Charles Crochard, who was a handsome fellow, was on very intimate terms there, as it appeared."

"Yes, yes," said Cerizet, "I can see now Mademoiselle Beaumesnil's embarrassment when she testified, and her almost total loss of voice when the president of the court asked her age."

"The theft was committed boldly in broad daylight," continued Du Portail, "and as soon as Crochard had the jewel-case in his possession he went off to Saint-Sulpice Church, where he had appointed to meet a confederate. Having received the diamonds from him, and being already provided with a passport, this accomplice was to start immediately for some foreign country. As luck would have it, Crochard, on entering the church, found himself confronted, not by the man he expected, who was a few moments behind time, but by a celebrated

detective who was perfectly well known to him, as this was not the young rascal's first misunderstanding with the law. The absence of his confederate; the chance encounter with this officer, who, as he imagined, looked at him in a singular way; the revolt of his conscience; and, finally, a rapid movement toward one of the doors which the detective happened by the merest chance to make, convinced the thief that he was under surveillance. In his excitement he lost his head and determined at any price to get rid of the jewel-case which would put him in the position of being caught *flagrante delicto*, if, as he did not doubt, he were arrested when he left the church, which he fancied was surrounded by the police.—His eye fell on Toupillier, who was at that time dispenser of holy water; he went to his stall, and, after making sure that their colloquy was noticed by no one, said to him: 'Will you keep this little package for me? It is lace. I am going to see a countess near by who's very poor pay; instead of settling my bill she wanted to see these *articles*, which are the latest things out, and asked me to let her have them on credit. I'd rather not have them with me. Be very careful,' he added, 'not to touch the paper around the box, for there's nothing so hard as to do up a bundle in the same folds.' "

"The bungler!" cried Céritet, naïvely, "all his injunctions must have made the other man anxious to look."

"You're a clever moralist," said Du Portail.

"An hour later, when Charles Crochard, having seen nothing to cause alarm, returned to get his package, Toupillier wasn't at his post. You can imagine the eagerness with which Crochard, at early mass on the following day, accosted the dispenser of holy water, whom he found attending to his duties; but night, as they say, brings counsel; the good man boldly declared that he had received nothing from him and didn't know what he was talking about."

"And he couldn't attack him and make a noise about it!" remarked Céritet, who was not far from sympathizing with a trick so audaciously played.

"Of course the theft was already noised abroad," continued Du Portail, "and Toupillier, who was a very shrewd fellow, had cunningly calculated that the thief could not accuse him without betraying himself and putting himself in a position where he would have to restore the property. At the trial Crochard didn't mention his misadventure, and during the six years that he passed at the galleys, a portion of his sentence of ten years at hard labor having been remitted, he never hinted to anyone that he was the victim of misplaced confidence."

"That was true grit!" said Céritet; the narrative aroused his keenest interest, and he allowed himself to regard the affair from the standpoint of a connoisseur and artist.

"In the interval," continued Du Portail, "Madame Beaumesnil had died, leaving her daughter some trifling remnants of a handsome fortune, and notably

these diamonds, which were expressly mentioned in her will and bequeathed to Lydie if they *should be recovered*.

"Aha!" said Céritet, "that was hard on Toupiller; for, having to do with a man of your calibre—"

"Filled with the idea of vengeance, Charles Crochard's first step on regaining his liberty was to denounce Toupiller as receiver of the diamonds. But when he was arrested and subjected to examination he defended himself with such extraordinary simplicity and good humor, that, as there was no evidence in support of the accusation, the magistrate finally discharged him. He lost his place, however, as dispenser of holy water, and had great difficulty in obtaining permission to beg at the door of Saint-Sulpice. I was entirely convinced of his guilt; notwithstanding the magistrate's decision I succeeded in having a strict watch kept upon his movements, but I relied most of all upon myself. Being an annuitant, with considerable leisure time, I attached myself to our thief's skin, and undertook the most important enterprise of my whole life in order to unmask him. He lived at that time on Rue du Cœur-Volant; I succeeded in hiring a room adjoining his, and one night, through a hole which I had with much labor drilled in the wall that separated us, I saw our man take the case from a very ingeniously contrived hiding-place, and pass well nigh an hour gazing in ecstasy at our diamonds, holding them so that the light would make them

sparkle, and pressing his lips passionately to them; the man loved them for themselves and had never thought of turning them into money."

"I understand," said Cérizet; "a mania something like Cardillac's, the jeweler that somebody wrote a play about."

"That's about it," said Du Portail; "the wretch had fallen in love with the jewels; and so, a few days after, when I went to him and gave him to understand that I knew everything, he proposed to me, in order not to be deprived of what he called the consolation of his life, that we should let him keep them while he lived, and pledged himself in his gratitude to make Mademoiselle de la Peyrade his sole legatee; at the same time he informed me that he possessed a considerable sum in gold, to which he was adding every day, as well as a piece of real estate and something in the public funds."

"If he was acting in good faith," said Cérizet, "the proposition was worth accepting; the interest of the capital locked up in the diamonds was abundantly made up by the remainder of the inheritance."

"You see, my dear man," said Du Portail, "that I made no mistake in trusting him. However, my precautions were taken; I demanded that he should occupy a room in my house, where I watched him very closely; the hiding-place of which you so cleverly discovered the secret was prepared under my directions, but one thing that you don't know is that the secret spring, at the same time that it opened the iron cupboard, rang a peal on a very

noisy bell in my apartment, placed there for the purpose of giving me notice of any attempt that might be made to carry off our treasure."

"Poor Madame Cardinal!" cried Cérezet, jocosely, "how far she was out in her reckoning!"

"So this is the situation," said Du Portail: "because of my interest in my old friend's nephew, and also because, on account of the relationship, this marriage seems to me to be an eminently suitable one, I intend that Théodore shall marry his cousin and this *dot*. As it is possible that La Peyrade may be disinclined to fall in with my plans on account of his cousin's mental condition, I did not think best to make the proposition directly to him. You came in my way, I know you to be clever and cunning, and immediately it occurred to me to employ you in this little matrimonial negotiation. Now you understand! you will say to him that you know of a wealthy girl, who has one slight drawback, but, to balance it, a good round dowry; you will mention no names, and will come at once to me and tell me how the suggestion is received."

"Your confidence," rejoined Cérezet, "pleases me as much as it honors me, and I will do my best to justify it."

"We must make no mistake," continued Du Portail; "to refuse is likely to be the first impulse of a man who is playing a game elsewhere, but we won't admit that we're beaten. I don't readily abandon my ideas when I think they are wise, and even if we should have to carry our zeal for La Peyrade's

welfare so far as to shut him up at Clichy, I am determined not to be balked in an arrangement of which I am certain that he will eventually recognize the wisdom. And so, in any event, you must buy Monsieur Dutocq's claim."

"At its face value?" asked Cérezet.

"Yes, at its face value if you can do no better; we won't haggle over a few thousand francs; but, when the bargain is made, Monsieur Dutocq must assure us of his assistance, or, at all events, of his neutrality. Judging from what you have told me of the other marriage, I think it useless to remind you that we haven't a moment to lose before putting the irons in the fire."

"I have an appointment with La Peyrade two days hence," observed Cérezet; "we have a little matter of business to settle. Don't you think it would be well to wait until that meeting, when I can bring this other matter up incidentally? If he kicks, that course would be more consistent with *our* dignity, it seems to me."

"Very well," said Du Portail, "that's not a long delay; and remember, Monsieur, that if you are successful, instead of a man entitled to hold you to a strict account of your imprudent connivance with Madame Cardinal, you will have in me a debtor, ready to serve you in any way, and whose influence goes farther than is generally supposed."

After such kind words the two new friends could not part otherwise than on the best of terms and well content with each other.

■

Like the *Tourniquet Saint-Jean*, the *Rocher de Cancale*, whither the scene is now to change, is naught but a memory to-day. A wine-shop with pewter-counters has taken the place of that *Temple of Taste*, that European sanctuary which had sheltered within its walls all the epicures of the Empire and the Restoration.

On the day preceding that appointed for the meeting, La Peyrade received a line from Cérezet to this effect:

“To-morrow at half-past six at the *Rocher*, lease or no lease.”

Cérezet had occasion to see Dutocq every day, being his copyist, so he notified him by word of mouth; but the careful reader will remark the difference in the hour named to this other guest. “Be at the *Rocher* at *quarter* past six,” Cérezet said to him; it was evident that he desired to have at least a quarter of an hour for consultation before La Peyrade’s arrival.

This quarter of an hour the usurer intended to employ in driving a bargain for Dutocq’s notes, and he thought that the offer would be likely to be more favorably received if made point-blank, and without time for preparation. By giving the vender no opportunity for reflection he might perhaps be induced to loosen his hold, and, when he had purchased

the claim at less than its face value, the man from Rue des Poules could make up his mind at his leisure whether he could safely appropriate the difference, or whether it would be better to account honestly to Du Portail for the rebate he had obtained for him. We ought to say, however, that, aside from any question of self-interest, Cérizet would still have tried to gain a point on *his friend*; it was an instinct with him and a necessity of his nature; in business he had the same horror of a straight line that amateur gardeners in England exhibit in laying out their paths.

Having still a part of the price of his clerkship to pay, and being compelled to live most sparingly, Dutocq's ordinary fare was not so sumptuous that a dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale* was not an event of importance in the domestic economy of his existence. He kept his appointment, therefore, with a promptness which bore witness to the interest he took in the meeting, and at precisely a quarter past six made his appearance in the private room of the restaurant where Cérizet was awaiting him.

"It's very funny," said he, "that we are once more in the same situation in which our relations with La Peyrade began; but the place for the meeting between the three emperors is selected this time with more regard to comfort, and I much prefer the Tilsit of Rue Montorgeuil to the Tilsit of Rue de l'Ancienne-Comédie, that dreary Restaurant Pinson."

"Faith," replied Cérizet, "I doubt if the results

obtained will justify the substitution; for, after all, where do our profits from the formation of the triumvirate come in?"

"Why, when you come to that," said Dutocq, "it was a one-sided bargain. No one can say that La Peyrade lost much time, in arranging for his installation at the *Tuileries*, if I may permit myself the pun. The rascal has gone ahead fast, we must admit."

"Not so fast but that his marriage is not, at this moment, terribly compromised."

"What's that! compromised?"

"Yes; I have been employed to suggest a woman to him in an indirect way, and I doubt if he has any choice in the matter."

"What the devil, my dear fellow! do you mean to say that you're thinking of lending a hand to an opposition marriage, when we have a mortgage on the other?"

"My friend, a man can't always control circumstances; I saw from the way things were working, that the one we had a hand in arranging was bound to go by the board, so I have tried to get a picking out of the new negotiations."

"Ah! so this Théodore is going to get away from us? Who's the new one? is there a fortune?"

"The *dot* is very fair, quite equal to Mademoiselle Colleville's."

"Then I snap my fingers at him; La Peyrade signed the notes and he shall pay them."

"He shall pay, he shall pay;—that's just the

question. You're no business man, no more is Théodore; he may take it into his head to dispute the notes. How do you know that when their origin is disclosed, and the Thuillier marriage falls through, the court won't declare them void for lack of consideration? As for myself I can snap my fingers at the dispute: I have no concern in it, and besides I have taken my precautions; but you're clerk to a justice of the peace—don't you catch a glimpse of a crow to pluck with the chancellor's office as a result of such a lawsuit?"

"It seems to me, my dear fellow," said Dutocq, with the testy air of a man who finds himself confronted by an argument he can not answer, "it seems to me that you have a passion for stirring things up and meddling.—"

"I tell you," retorted Cérizet, "that this affair sought me out, and I saw so plainly at the outset that it was hopeless to struggle against the evil influences that are at work against us, that I made up my mind to save myself by a sacrifice."

"What sort of a sacrifice, may I ask?"

"Parbleu! I sold my claim, leaving to those who bought it the pleasure of arranging with Monsieur l'Avocat."

"But who bought it?"

"Who do you suppose would have put themselves in my shoes, if not the people who have enough interest in bringing about the other marriage to try and force Monsieur Théodore into it even by shutting him up?"

"Then my notes are equally necessary to them?"

"No doubt, but I didn't want to dispose of them without consulting you."

"Well, what do they offer?"

"Bless me! just what I accepted myself; knowing better than you the danger of the competition I decided to sell out on unfavorable terms."

"What were the terms?"

"I let the notes go for fifteen thousand."

"Nonsense!" said Dutocq, with a shrug: "it's very evident that you expect to make yourself whole out of the brokerage of the affair, which, for all I know, may be a scheme concocted by La Peyrade and yourself."

"You don't mince words, old fellow, at all events; an infamous idea comes into your brain, and you eject it with the most delightful indifference. Luckily you'll hear me broach the subject to Théodore in a moment, and you can judge from his manner how much connivance there is between us."

"All right!" said Dutocq, "I withdraw my insinuation; but upon my word your employers are regular pirates; it's wicked to slaughter folks so; another blow, and I haven't like you a reserve that I can fall back on."

"My poor fellow, this is how I argued: 'That good Dutocq is hard put to it to pay the balance due on his clerkship; here's a way for him to settle it at one stroke; the result proves how much uncertainty there is in the La Peyrade compromise, they

offer him spot-cash, and so perhaps it's not a very bad bargain for him.''"

"Agreed; but to lose the two-fifths!"

"Look here!" said Cérezet, "you said something just now about a reserve; I can see a possible way of starting one for you; and if you choose to undertake to lead an attack on the Colleville affair and take the reverse of the part you've played in it thus far, I don't despair of getting a round twenty thousand out of it for you."

"Then you think this new arrangement won't be satisfactory to La Peyrade? that he'll fight against it? Is it some heiress that the rascal's already taken earnest-money from?"

"All I can tell you is that we must wait for the drawing to know the result."

"I ask nothing better than to draw as you say, and to make myself unpleasant to La Peyrade; but five thousand francs; think of it! it's too much to lose!"

At that moment the door opened and a waiter introduced the expected guest.

"You can serve the dinner," said Cérezet to the waiter; "we expect no one else."

It was easy to see that Théodore was beginning to take his flight toward higher social spheres. Elegance in dress had become his constant thought. He was in full evening dress, dress-coat and patent-leathers, while his partners received him in redingote and muddy boots.

"Messeigneurs," said he, "I fear that I'm a little

late; but that devil of a Thuillier, with the pamphlet I'm putting together for him, is the most unbearable creature. I was unfortunate enough to arrange with him that we should look over the proofs together; at every new paragraph we have a struggle. 'The public won't understand what I can't understand,' he always says: 'I'm no literary man, but I'm a practical man.' And I have to fight over every sentence. I thought the session we've just had would never end."

"What do you expect, my dear fellow?" said Dutocq; "when one wants to get ahead he must have the courage to make some sacrifice; when you're safely married you can hold up your head."

"Ah yes!" said La Peyrade with a sigh, "I will hold it up too; for, ever since the time you made me eat the bread of anguish I have been getting terribly weary."

"Céritet's going to regale us with succulent food to-day," said Dutocq.

And at first they turned their attention exclusively to the menu which the principal tenant that-was-to-be, with his memories of happier days, had ordered. As is always the case at political dinners where every guest, although his mind is full of the burning questions of the day, makes a point of not mentioning them for fear of relinquishing his advantages by seeming too eager, the conversation for a long while turned upon none but matters of general interest, and not until the dessert appeared did Céritet make

up his mind to ask La Peyrade what had been decided regarding the terms of the lease.

"Nothing, my dear fellow," said La Peyrade.

"What! nothing? Why, I certainly gave you time enough to come to some decision—"

"And something is decided, namely, that there will be no principal tenant; Mademoiselle Brigitte proposes to manage the building herself."

"That's a different matter," said Cérezet with an affected air. "After the agreement you made with me I confess that I was far from expecting such a result."

"What could I do, my dear man? I promised subject to ratification, and I had no way of giving any different turn to the affair. In her capacity of masterful woman and specimen of perpetual movement, Mademoiselle Brigitte reflected that she could herself undertake the management of the property as well as not, and thus put in her own pocket the profits you calculated on. I wasted my breath talking to her about the fuss and worry she would subject herself to; 'Bah! bah!' she retorted, 'it will keep my blood moving and be an excellent thing for my health.'"

"Why it's pitiful!" exclaimed Cérezet; "the poor woman won't know where to begin; she has no idea what an unoccupied building is, and that she's got to find tenants for it from top to bottom."

"I gave her the benefit of all those arguments," rejoined La Peyrade, "but I didn't even shake her resolution. There you are, my dear democrats; you brewed the Revolution of '89; you fancied that

you were making an excellent speculation in dethroning the noble by the bourgeois, and you simply put yourselves in the gutter. This sounds like a paradox, but it wasn't the peasant who was made to pay taxes and work on the roads at pleasure, it was the noble. The aristocracy, solicitous for their dignity, denied themselves a multitude of plebeian accomplishments, even that of learning to write, and so were in fact dependent upon the whole mass of underlings whom they were obliged to employ and to trust in three-fourths of the acts of their lives. That was the reign of intendants, of intelligent and cunning clerks, through whose hands all the affairs of the great families passed, and who, although they did not deserve the shocking reputation they acquired by force of circumstances, grew rich simply by the parings of the vast fortunes they administered. Now we have a host of utilitarian aphorisms: 'One is never so well served as by himself. There is no shame in attending to one's own affairs,' and a thousand other bourgeois maxims, which, by making action every man's proper sphere, have done away with the employment of middle-men. Why shouldn't Mademoiselle Brigitte Thuillier undertake the management of her own property, when dukes and peers of France go in person to the Bourse, when they negotiate their own leases, read over their contracts themselves before signing them and dispute about their provisions at the notary's office, whom they used in old days disdainfully to call a scrivener?"

During La Peyrade's harangue Céribert had had time to recover from the blow he had received full in the face, and he now said, carelessly, paving the way for a transition to the other subject he had undertaken to negotiate:

"All that you say is very clever, my dear boy; but the thing that proves our setback most clearly in my eyes is that you are not on so influential a footing with Mademoiselle Thuillier as you would have us believe. She escapes you handily at need, and I begin to doubt whether the marriage is so sure to take place as Dutocq and I have been glad to think it was."

"Of course," replied La Peyrade, "there is still much to be done to complete our task, but I think it's well advanced."

"Well, I think, on the contrary, that you've lost ground, and it's very easy to see why; you've done your people an enormous favor, and they'll never forgive you."

"Well, we shall see," said La Peyrade; "I still have more than one hold on them."

"No, indeed you haven't; you thought you were doing marvels by heaping favors on them, and now that they've shaken clear of you they'll make no account of you; that's the way the human heart is made, especially the bourgeois heart; it isn't, you see, because I get the reflex action of this failure that I feel you're going to meet with, but, if I were you, I wouldn't feel as if I were on firm ground, and if I saw any chance to turn—"

"What! because I couldn't get a lease for you, am I to throw the helve after the axe?"

"I say again," retorted Cérizet, "that I don't look at the matter with interested eyes; but, as I have no doubt that you acted as a true friend should and did your utmost to get what I wanted, I look upon the way you were shown the door as a very ominous symptom; indeed it prompts me to tell you something I shouldn't otherwise have mentioned, because I find that when you have an end in view you should go straight on without looking behind or in front, and without allowing any other aspiration to turn you aside."

"Come, come!" said La Peyrade, "What does all this talk mean? What have you to propose to me? What will it cost?"

"My dear fellow," rejoined Cérizet, without heeding the impertinence, "you yourself can fix a value on such a find as a young woman, well-educated, good-looking, talented, with a dowry at least equal to Céleste's, and which she will have at first hand; also, a hundred thousand francs in diamonds, like Mademoiselle Georges on provincial play-bills; and lastly—and this ought above all things to make an impression on a man of ambitious temperament—power to dispose of political preferment in her husband's favor."

"And you have this treasure in your hand?" demanded La Peyrade, incredulously.

"Better than that; I am authorized to offer it to you, I had almost said that I have it in charge to do so."

"My friend, you're laughing at me, and unless I assume that this phoenix has some fearful defect that would vitiate any contract—"

"I agree," said Cérezet, "that there is a trifling matter to be taken into account; not on the part of the family, for, to tell the truth, the young woman hasn't any."

"Ah!" said La Peyrade, "a natural child,—well?"

"Well, she's been a virgin now for some time; she may perhaps be twenty-nine years old; but there's nothing so easy as to make a young widow out of an aging girl, in imagination."

"And is that all the poison there is?"

"Yes, all that is irreparable."

"What do you mean by that? Has rhinoplasty to be tried?"

As addressed to Cerizet this question had an aggressive tone which indeed had been noticeably present in the advocate's conversation since the dinner began. But it did not enter into the negotiator's rôle to seem to notice it.

"No," he replied, "our nose is as perfect as our foot and our figure, but we may be a little inclined to hysteria."

"Good!" exclaimed La Peyrade, "and as it's only a step from hysteria to mental alienation—"

"Well, yes," said Cérezet hastily, "sorrow has left a slight derangement in our brain; but the doctors are unanimous in their diagnosis, that with the first child every trace of this little disturbance of mind will disappear."

"I consider the doctors quite infallible," retorted the advocate, "but, in the face of all your discouragement, you will permit me, my friend, to persevere with Mademoiselle Colleville. It is an absurd thing to confess, perhaps, but it is a fact that I am gradually falling in love with the little creature. It isn't that her beauty is so resplendent, or that the splendor of her dowry dazzles me, but I find in the child perfect sincerity combined with a great supply of common sense, and,—and this is the decisive consideration in my mind—her sincere and deep-rooted piety has a great attraction for me; I think a husband will be happy with her."

"Yes," said Cérezet, who, having been an actor in his day, might well have this fleeting reminiscence of Molière:

"Your hymen will be steeped in pleasures and delights."

The allusion to Tartuffe was keenly felt by La Peyrade, who at once took it up and added:

"By contact with her innocence, I shall throw off the infection of the base society in which I have lived too long."

"And you will pay your notes," retorted Cérezet, "which I advise you to do with the least possible delay, for Dutocq here just informed me that he shouldn't be at all sorry to see the color of your money at last."

"I? not at all," interposed Dutocq; "on the contrary I consider that our friend has delayed no longer than he has a perfect right to do."

"Well, for my part," said La Peyrade, "I am of Cérizet's opinion, and I hold that the less just a debt is, and on that account the more debatable and shadowy, the more haste one should be in to be free from it."

"But you take a very bitter tone, my dear La Peyrade!" said Dutocq.

La Peyrade drew a wallet from his pocket.

"Have you your notes here, Dutocq?" said he.

"Faith, no, my dear fellow," said the clerk; "I don't carry them about me because they're in Cérizet's hands."

"Well," said the advocate rising, "if you choose to call on me, I pay on demand; Cérizet can give you some information on that subject."

"What! you are going to leave us before we have our coffee?" said Cérizet in the utmost astonishment.

"Yes; at eight o'clock I have an appointment before an arbitrator; besides, we've said what we had to say; you haven't your lease, but you have your twenty-five thousand francs, and Dutocq's are ready for him when he pleases to apply to my cash-box; so I see no reason why I shouldn't go about my business and bid you a most cordial good-evening."

"Aha!" said Cérizet, as La Peyrade left the room, "a rupture!"

"And emphasized with the utmost care, "observed Dutocq. "What an air he put on when he pulled out his wallet!"

"But where the devil can he have got the money?" asked the usurer.

"In the same place, no doubt," retorted the clerk ironically, "where he got what he needed to take up the notes you were obliged to part with at such an enormous reduction."

"My dear Dutocq," said Céritet, "I'll explain to you just how the insolent cur cleaned his slate with me, and you'll see if he didn't, as a matter of fact, steal fifteen thousand francs from me."

"That may be; but you, my genial copyist, undertook to take ten thousand from me."

"No indeed; I was actually employed to buy up your claim, and my offer had risen to twenty thousand when the fine Théodore came in."

"Well," said the clerk, "when we leave here we'll go to your place, and you'll give the notes, because you understand that at the earliest Christian hour to-morrow morning I propose to call on what our gentleman calls his cash box. I don't want his paying humor to grow cold."

"And you will act very wisely, for I promise you that it won't be long before there'll be a blow-up in his career."

"Do you mean that there's any truth in this tale of a madwoman that you want him to marry? I must confess that if I were in his place, with affairs going on as swimmingly as they are with him, I wouldn't have wasted much time on the matter either; the Ninas and Ophelias are very interesting on the stage, but in a family—"

"In a family, when they bring with them a handsome dowry, you're their guardian," rejoined Céritzet sententiously, "and you may say that you have the fortune and not the wife."

"True," said Dutocq, "that's one way to look at it."

"If you don't object," said Céritzet, "we'll go somewhere else for our coffee. This dinner has turned out so badly, that I'm in a hurry to get out of this closet,—there's no air here either."

He summoned the waiter.

"The bill!" said he.

"Why, it's paid, *m'sieu.*"

"Paid! who paid it?"

"The gentleman who just went out."

"Why I never heard of such a thing!" cried Céritzet; "I order the dinner and you let a stranger pay for it!"

"I didn't do it, *m'sieu.*" said the waiter; "the gentleman paid the cashier; it's likely she thought it was all understood; people aren't very common who go out of their way to pay bills that don't belong to them."

"All right, you can go!" said Céritzet, dismissing him.

"Don't the gentlemen take coffee?" he asked before leaving the room; "it's paid for."

"That's just why we won't take it," snarled Céritzet. "Upon my word it is past belief that such blunders should be made in a house like this.—Can you imagine such cheek?" he asked when the waiter had gone.

"Pshaw!" said Dutocq taking up his hat, "it is a regular school-boy's trick; he wants to show that he has money; anybody can see he isn't used to it."

"No, no, not at all," said Cérezet, "it's one way of giving point to the rupture. It's as if he said: 'I don't want to be indebted to you even for a dinner.'"

"You see, my dear fellow," suggested Dutocq as they went down stairs, "this banquet was given to celebrate your enthronement as principal tenant. He failed to get the lease for you. I can understand that his conscience may have troubled him at the thought of letting you pay for the dinner, which thus became, like my notes, an obligation without consideration."

Cérezet let this malicious explanation pass without comment. They had reached the cashier's desk, presided over by the lady who had allowed herself to be paid unseasonably, and in the interest of his dignity the usurer felt called upon to make a scene.

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The boon-companions at last left the house together, and the man from Rue des Poules took his employer to a low wine shop on Passage du Saumon for their coffee.

There the host who had come off so cheaply recovered his good humor; he was like a stranded fish thrown back into the water; having reached that stage of degradation at which a man feels ill at ease in places frequented by respectable people, Cérizet felt something like ecstasy when he found himself once more in his element in this resort, where a noisy game of pool was in progress for the benefit of *one of the conquerors of the Bastile*.

He had a reputation as a skilful billiardist in the establishment and was urged to take part in the game that was already begun. In technical language, *he bought a ball*; that is to say one of the players sold him his turn and his chances. Dutocq availed himself of this arrangement to take to his heels, ostensibly to go and inquire for a sick friend.

Soon after, in his shirt-sleeves and with a pipe between his teeth, Cérizet had just achieved one of those master-strokes which call forth frenzied applause from the galleries, when the triumphant glance which he cast about met with a terrible killjoy.

Among the audience was Du Portail, gazing at

him over the head of his cane on which his chin was resting.

A painful flush overspread Cérizet's cheeks, and he hesitated whether he should recognize and salute the annuitant, who seemed so out of place there. Without making up his mind what course to adopt touching this embarrassing meeting he was much preoccupied; his play showed the effect of his preoccupation, and before long an ill-judged stroke put him out of the game.

While he was putting on his coat in exceeding ill-humor, Du Portail rose and brushed by him on his way out.

"Rue Montmartre, at the end of the passage," he said in a low tone.

When they met, Cérizet had the bad taste to try and explain the unseemly plight in which he had been surprised.

"Why, in order too see you there, I must have been there myself," said Du Portail.

"True," replied the usurer, "I was considerably astonished to meet a peaceful resident of the Quartier Saint-Sulpice in that place."

"Which goes to prove," retorted the annuitant in a tone which nipped in the bud all hope of explanation and all inquisitiveness, "that I am accustomed to go everywhere, and that I have a star that guides me to the path of people I wish to meet; I was thinking of you when you came in. Well, what have you done?"

"Nothing worth doing," said Cérizet. "After

playing me a trick he ought to be hanged for, and cheating me out of a magnificent business opportunity, our man rejected the proposal with the most supreme contempt. There's no hope of getting Dutocq's notes; La Peyrade appeared to be in funds, for he wanted to take up the notes on the spot, and he will certainly pay them off to-morrow morning."

"Then he looks upon his marriage with this Mademoiselle Colleville as settled?"

"Not only does he look upon it as settled but he undertakes now to make us believe that it's an affair of the heart. He spouted a long tirade to persuade me that he's really in love."

"Very well!" said Du Portail, taking occasion to show that he also could talk the dialect of the wine-shops,—"*stop the expense.*"—Which means: 'Don't do anything more about it.'—"I'll undertake to checkmate monsieur. But do you come and see me to-morrow to post me as to the family he proposes to enter. You have failed in one affair; but never fear: with me others are sure to turn up."

With that he signaled to the driver of an empty cab that was passing, and bestowing a friendly but patronizing nod upon Céritet, he gave the address on Rue Honoré-Chevalier.

As he went down Rue Montmartre on his way back to the Estrapade quarter, Céritet tortured his brain trying to guess at the identity of this little old man, of few words, imperious in his suggestions, who had the appearance of casting grapples at people when he spoke to them, and who went so far from

home to pass his evening in a resort where, in view of the air of distinction which characterized his whole person, he was certainly most tremendously out of place.

When he reached the neighborhood of the Market, Cérizet had not solved the problem; but at that moment his attention was rudely withdrawn from it by a mighty blow on the back.

Turning quickly about he found himself face to face with Madame Cardinal, whom he might not unnaturally have expected to meet with in that region, which she visited every morning to replenish her stock in trade.

Since the memorable evening on Rue Honoré-Chevalier, the worthy woman, notwithstanding the clemency with which she had been treated, had not deemed it prudent to make other than very brief appearances at her domicile, and for two days past she had been drowning her chagrin over her misadventure among the gin-shops, known as *licensed comforters*.

Her speech was thick and her face inflamed.

"Well, papa," she said to Cérizet, "how did you come off with the little old fellow?"

"In a few words," replied the usurer, "I convinced him that there was nothing between him and me but a misunderstanding. In the whole business, my poor Madame Cardinal, you acted with really unpardonable levity; tell me, when you asked me to help you to make sure of your uncle's property, did you know that he had a natural daughter

to whom he had long before declared his purpose of leaving everything by will? The little old man who interrupted you in your absurd attempt to anticipate your inheritance was no other than the legatee's guardian."

"Ah! so he's a guardian!" said La Cardinal; "well, guardians are polite folks. To talk to a woman as old as me about sending for the police, because she wanted to find out whether her uncle was leaving anything! If that ain't horrible, enough to sicken you!"

"Come, come!" said Cérezet, "you mustn't complain, Mère Cardinal; you got out of it mighty well."

"Well, what about you, who picked the locks and wanted to fasten on to the diamonds, under cover of marrying my daughter! Do you suppose my daughter wants any part of you? a lawful daughter too! 'Mother,' says she, 'I'll never give my heart to a man with a nose like that!'"

"So you've found your daughter, have you?"

"No longer ago than last night; she's dropped her drunken player, and I can flatter myself she's in a superb position, eating off o' silver-plate, with her carriage by the month, and made much of by a lawyer who'd marry her to-morrow only he's got to wait till his father and mother die, because his father's a mayor, and the marriage might make a row in the government."

"Get out, my good woman," said Cérezet, "what devilish fol-de-rol are you giving me? the father's a *mère*—mother—"

"Well, why not! mayor of his arrondissement and that's the eleventh—Monsieur Minard, a retired cocoa-dealer, and rich as rich."

"Ah! very good! very good! I know him. And you say Olympe is with his son?"

"That is, they don't live together, to stop tongues from wagging, though he only sees her on the square; he lives with his father, and meantime they've bought their stuff and put it and my child in lodgings over Chaussée-d'Antin way: a stylish neighborhood, eh!"

"Why that seems to me a very good arrangement," said Cérezet; "and then, you see, heaven didn't intend us for each other—"

"Yes, that's so; I think the child will end by giving me a good deal of satisfaction, and that reminds me that there's something I want to consult you about."

"What is it?" asked Cérezet.

"Why, as my daughter's in luck, I can't go on crying fish in the streets; and then, considering that my uncle's disinherited me, it seems to me I have a right to an elementary pension."

"You're dreaming, my poor woman! your daughter's a minor, and you're bound to support her, she isn't bound to supply you with food."

"In that case," said Madame Cardinal, growing warm, "those who haven't anything must give to those who have! That's just like the law—it's as amiable as the guardian who talks about sending for the police for nothing. Well! let him send for the police! let him have my head cut off! That won't

prevent my saying that the rich people are all thieves, and the people must get up a revolution to get their rights, what you, my boy, and my daughter and that lawyer Minard and the little guardian kick to one side—d'ye hear?"

Seeing that his ex-mother-in-law-to-be had reached an alarming stage of excitement, Cérizet lost no time in taking to his heels, and when he was more than fifty feet away, he heard her still hurling epithets at him, which he promised himself to make her pay for in full the first time she came to the bank on Rue des Poules to ask for accommodation.

As he approached his house, Cérizet, who was nothing less than courageous, felt a thrill of terror as he spied a figure standing in the shadow near his door, which, as he drew near, moved toward him.

Happily it was only Dutocq. He had come for his notes. Cérizet turned them over to him with a very bad grace, complaining of the suspicion implied by a visit at so unseasonable an hour.

Dutocq paid little heed to his sensitiveness, but presented himself at La Peyrade's bright and early in the morning.

La Peyrade paid the notes to the last sou, and replied with marked coldness to some sentimental remarks which Dutocq allowed himself to indulge in when he had the money safely in his pocket.

Everything in the advocate's exterior suggested the slave who has broken his chains and does not contemplate making a very Christianlike use of his liberty.



As he was bowing his creditor out, the latter found himself face to face with a woman in the dress of a servant, who was apparently on the point of pulling La Peyrade's bell.

This woman seemed to be an acquaintance of Dutocq, for he said to her :

"Aha! little mother, we have felt the need of consulting a lawyer; you are right; at the family council some very serious charges were made, in respect to you."

"I am not afraid of anybody, thank God! and I can hold my head up anywhere," retorted the person thus addressed.

"So much the better!" said the magistrate's clerk, "so much the better! but you will probably be summoned soon before the magistrate who has the case to investigate. However, you're in good hands, and my friend La Peyrade will advise you wisely."

"Monsieur is mistaken," replied the servant; "I haven't come to consult the advocate on the subject he imagines."

"Nevertheless, keep your eyes open, my dear woman, for I tell you now that you'll be hauled over the coals in fine shape. The relations are in a furious rage with you, and no one can make them believe that you're not very rich."

As he spoke Dutocq had his eye upon Théodore, who shrank from his gaze and invited his client to enter.

This is what had taken place between La Peyrade and this woman on the preceding day.

La Peyrade, as the reader will remember, was in the habit of attending early morning mass at the church of his parish. For some time he had found that he was the object of a peculiarly intent scrutiny, which he was sadly at a loss to explain, on the part of the woman whom we have just seen enter his office, and who, to speak as Dorine spoke of *Tartuffe*, was always careful to be on hand *at his precise hour*.

Was it an affair of the heart? That explanation was not compatible with the advanced age and saintly air of the devotee, who affected, like a nun, to conceal her hair beneath the scanty cap, called the *Jansenist*, by which a few fervent remnants of that sect in the Quartier Saint-Jacques can still be recognized; on the other hand her clothes, which were scrupulously neat and almost rich, and a golden cross hanging at her neck by a black velvet ribbon, excluded the idea of timid and shrinking mendicity, which might have taken all this time to find courage to declare itself.

In the morning of the day when the dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale* was to take place, tired of a proceeding which had finally become a source of serious preoccupation, and noticing, moreover, that his enigma in a round cap was preparing to accost him,

La Peyrade went up to her and asked if she had any request to make of him.

"Monsieur," was the reply with an accent of profound mystery, "is the renowned Monsieur de la Peyrade, the poor man's advocate?"

"I am La Peyrade, and I have had occasion to render some services to the poor people of the quarter."

Thus spoke the uncertain modesty of the Provençal, who, at that moment, did not exhibit the most salient peculiarity of his countrymen.

"Might I then hope that monsieur in his generosity would listen to me in consultation?"

"The place," replied La Peyrade, "is not well adapted to a conference. What you have to say to me is evidently of consequence, for you have been trying to make up your mind to speak to me for a long time; I live near by Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, and if you will take the trouble to come to my office—"

"That will not incommoder monsieur?"

"Not the least in the world; it's my profession to listen to clients."

"At what hour, please, that I may not disturb monsieur?"

"Whenever you choose; I shall be at home all the morning."

"Then I will wait and hear another mass at which I will receive the communion; I should not have dared to do so at this one, the thought of monsieur would have taken my mind too much from my

devotions. When I have concluded them, I will call upon monsieur about eight o'clock, if that will not inconvenience him."

"Why no, and there's no need of so much ceremony," said La Peyrade with a touch of impatience.

There may have been a suspicion of professional jealousy in that little testy movement, for he evidently had to do with a combatant who was able to give him points in humility.

At the appointed hour, not a moment before or after, the devotee rang at the advocate's door, and after inducing her with some difficulty to take a seat, he invited her to begin.

She thereupon had an attack of that little dilatory cough to which some people resort to obtain a breathing-space when they are face to face with a difficult subject. At last, however, she decided to enter upon the object of her visit.

"I hoped," said she, "that monsieur would deign to tell me if it is true that a very charitable man, lately deceased, has left a fund to reward servants who serve their masters faithfully?"

"It is the fact," replied La Peyrade, "that Monsieur de Montyon established certain prizes for virtuous conduct, which are often awarded to zealous and exemplary servants; but good conduct alone is not sufficient; to be entitled to one of these prizes, one must have shown the most praiseworthy devotion and Christian self-abnegation."

"Religion," said the devotee, "enjoins humility

upon us, and I certainly should not presume to sound my own praises, but as I have been for more than twenty years in the service of an old man, dull beyond words, a scientific man who has eaten up all his property in inventions, so that I am obliged to support him, some people have thought that perhaps I might not be held wholly undeserving of the prize."

"The Academy often selected its candidates from persons in your condition, I think," said La Peyrade. "What is your master's name?"

"Père Picot; he's not known by any other name in the quarter, where he often goes out dressed as if it were carnival time, so that the children crowd around him and all begin to shout: 'Good-day, Père Picot, good-day, Père Picot!' But you see he doesn't care what people think of him; he goes along engrossed by his own thoughts, and I find it's no use to spoil my temper cooking up some appetizing little thing for him to eat, for if you should ask him what he had for dinner he couldn't tell you; and yet he's a man full of expedients, and he has turned out some promising pupils; perhaps monsieur knows young Monsieur Phellion, professor at Saint-Louis College, who comes to our house very often."

"So your master's a mathematician?" said La Peyrade.

"Yes, monsieur, mathematics is what brought him to grief; he lost his way in a mass of ideas, which apparently have no sense at all, after destroying his sight at the Observatory, near by, where he was employed for years."

"Well," said La Peyrade, "you will need to have affidavits attesting your long-continued devotion to this old man; then I will draw up a memorial to the Academy and do what I can."

"How kind monsieur is!" exclaimed the devotee clasping her hands, "and if he would permit me to mention a little difficulty—"

"What is it?"

"I have been told, monsieur, that in order to obtain the prizes one must be actually in want."

"Not exactly that; and yet the Academy undoubtedly means to select persons who are not in easy circumstances, and who have had occasion to make sacrifices they could not really afford."

It seems to me I can claim to have made sacrifices, when a little property that I inherited has all been used up in running the house, and for fifteen years I haven't had one sou in wages; monsieur will agree that at three hundred francs a year with compound interest they'd amount to a pretty little sum."

At the suggestion of compound interest, which seemed to denote some financial knowledge, La Peyrade observed this Antigone with more attention.

"But this difficulty that you spoke of?—" he said.

"Monsieur will not think it a misfortune, I fancy," replied the saintly creature, "that a very rich uncle, who lately died in England, and who had never done anything for his family in his lifetime, should have left me twenty-five thousand francs in his will."

"Surely," said the advocate, "there's nothing that isn't perfectly natural and quite legitimate about that."

"And yet, monsieur, I have said to myself that that might prejudice my case before the judges."

"It's possible, because, being now in possession of a small competence, the sacrifices which you doubtless will continue to make for your master will seem something less meritorious."

"Certainly I shall never abandon him, poor dear man, in spite of all his faults, although the poor little hoard that has just come to me should be endangered."

"How so?" queried La Peyrade with interest.

"Ah! monsieur, just let him once find out that I've a little money, and it will be only a mouthful, it will all go into the perpetual motion contrivances and the other machines in which he's already ruined himself and me too."

"Then," said La Peyrade, "you would like to have this legacy that has fallen to you kept a secret from the Academy as well as from your master?"

"How clever monsieur is, and how quickly he understands things!" said the devotee with a smile.

"And, again," continued the advocate, "you don't want to keep the money by you?"

"So that my master can find it and take it! Besides, monsieur will understand, I shouldn't be sorry to have the money earning interest, so that I could buy the good man a few little comforts."

"And the largest possible interest?" said the advocate.

"Oh! monsieur, five or six per cent."

"Then I understand that you have been so long desirous of consulting me on two matters, a memorial to help you obtain a prize for virtue, and an investment?"

"Monsieur is so kind and charitable and encouraging!"

"The memorial, after some little inquiry, will be an easy matter; but it's much more difficult to suggest an investment that will be perfectly safe, and of which the secret will be religiously kept."

"Ah! if I only dared!" said the devotee.

"Dared do what?" asked La Peyrade.

"Monsieur understands me—"

"I? not in the least in the world."

"And yet I prayed just now that monsieur might be led to consent to take the money for me; I should have entire confidence that he would return it to me and would not mention it."

At that moment La Peyrade was reaping the fruit of his comedy of devotion to the necessitous classes. The chorus of the concierges of the quarter lauding him to the skies was the only thing that could have inspired this servant with the unlimited confidence she manifested in him. He immediately thought of Dutocq, and was not far from believing that this woman was sent to him by Providence. But the more desirous he felt of availing himself of the opportunity to assert his independence, the more

essential it appeared to him that he should seem to yield to importunity, and his objections were without end.

In truth he had no great faith in his client's character, and did not care, as the saying goes, to rob Peter to pay Paul, to substitute for a creditor who was, after all, his accomplice, a woman who might at any moment become troublesome, harass him with demands for payment and subject him to scandalous scenes which would injure his reputation incalculably. He decided, therefore, to play to win or lose the whole.

"My dear woman," said he to the devotee, "I am in no need of money, nor am I rich enough to pay you interest on twenty-five thousand francs without putting it to some use. All I can do is to deposit it in my name with Dupuis, the notary; he is a devout man, and you can see him Sundays sitting in the churchwardens' pew at your parish church. Notaries, you know, give no receipt, nor will I give you any,—I simply promise to leave among my papers, if I die, a memorandum which will assure the restitution of the sum to you. It's a matter of blind confidence, you see, and I do it against my inclination, and solely to oblige a person whose pious sentiments and the charitable use she intends to make of her little fortune, commend her in an especial way to my good will."

"If monsieur thinks that the matter can not be arranged in any other way—"

"It seems to me to be the only possible way,"

said La Peyrade. "However, I don't despair of getting six per cent interest for you, and you can rely upon its being paid to you with the utmost promptitude. But six months or a year may elapse before the notary is in condition to repay the principal, because the funds which notaries invest in mortgages as a general rule must be loaned for a fixed time, long or short as the case may be. Now, when you have the prize for virtue, which in all probability I shall be able to obtain for you, as you will no longer have any reason for concealing your little hoard,—although you have a reason to-day that I can readily understand—I must warn you that in case of any indiscretion on your part your money will be immediately returned to you, and I shall make no bones of telling every one how you tried to conceal your inheritance from that master to whom you were supposed to have devoted yourself in the most self-sacrificing way. That, you must see, would place you in the position of a fraud, and would greatly impair your reputation for sanctity."

"Oh!" said the devotee, "can it be that monsieur believes me to be the kind of a woman to say what I ought not?"

"Good heavens! my good woman, in business we must provide for all contingencies; money sets the best friends at variance and leads one on to do the things he was least likely to have anticipated. So think the matter over, and come to see me again in a few days; it's very possible that, meanwhile you will have thought of some better scheme, and I

myself, who have rashly offered to do something that is really distasteful to me, may have then discovered difficulties in our arrangement which I do not now see."

This menace, adroitly brought in at the close, was calculated to bring matters to a head at once.

"I have reflected," said the devotee; "with so devout a man as monsieur, one can run no risk."

Producing a little purse from beneath her wimple she took from it twenty-five bank notes. The rapidity with which she counted them was a revelation to La Peyrade. The woman was evidently accustomed to handling money and a strange thought passed through his mind.—

"Suppose she's making me a receiver of stolen property?" he thought.—"No," he said aloud, "to draw up the memorial which I am to present to the Academy, I shall need, as I told you, to make some few inquiries, and by-and-by I shall have occasion naturally enough to call on you. At what hour shall you be alone?"

"About four o'clock monsieur goes out to walk at the Luxembourg."

"Where do you live?"

"Number 9 Rue du Val-de-Grâce."

"Very well, at four o'clock; and if, as I doubt not, my information is favorable, I will take your money. Otherwise, if we are not likely to carry out the idea of obtaining the prize, you will have no reason for making a mystery of your inheritance; you could then invest your money under

more normal conditions than those I am obliged to propose to you."

"Oh! monsieur is very prudent," said the devotee, who had thought the affair concluded—"Thank God! I didn't steal the money, and monsieur can find out all about me in the quarter."

"That is just what it's indispensable that I should do," said La Peyrade dryly, for he did not like this keen intelligence which divined all his thoughts, hidden beneath a cloak of simplicity; "the prizes for virtue are not awarded on any one's word, and without being a thief you may not be exactly a Sister of Charity; there's a wide range between those two extremes."

"As monsieur pleases," said the devotee, "and he does me too great a service for me to object to his taking all possible precautions."

With that she bestowed a most unctuous salute upon him and went out, taking her money with her.

"The devil!" mused La Peyrade, "the woman is stronger than I am; she swallows snakes with an expression of gratitude and without a suspicion of a wry face. I haven't yet achieved such a mastery over my emotions."

He was afraid he had been too timorous, and that his prospective creditor might have changed her mind in the time intervening before his promised call upon her.

But the harm was done, and although he was worried by the thought that he had perhaps let an opportunity slip through his fingers, he would have

let his leg be cut off rather than yield to the impulse to anticipate, even by a single minute, the hour appointed for his visit.

The information he gathered in the quarter was quite contradictory; some people called his client a saint, others declared that she was a sly creature; but he learned nothing so prejudicial to her moral character as to induce him to draw back his hand from the good fortune she offered him.

When he saw her again at four o'clock he found her in the same mind.

With the cash in his pocket he betook himself to the *Rocher de Cancale*, and the unintentional aggressiveness with which he managed his rupture with his two partners should perhaps be attributed to the various emotions through which he had passed during that day. His ill-judged asperity on that occasion was consistent neither with his natural nor his acquired disposition; but the money that was burning his pocket had intoxicated him to a certain extent, and the mere touch of it stirred him to such a pitch of excitement and impatience of restraint, that he could not readily control himself. He had thrown Céritet over without so much as consulting Brigitte, and yet he had not altogether had the courage of his duplicity, for he had charged to the old maid's account a decision which emanated entirely from his own will and from the bitter memory of his struggles with the man who had long dominated him.

In fact La Peyrade throughout the day had failed to show himself the infallible man, armed at all

points, whom we have seen hitherto; once before, when he carried Cérezet the fifteen thousand francs handed him by Thuillier, he had been drawn into an insurrectionary movement against the usurer which had necessitated the decisive stroke of the Sauvaignou affair. The fact is that it is perhaps more difficult to be strong in good than in evil fortune.

The Farnese Hercules, calm and reposeful, expresses more emphatically the plenitude of muscular power than all the other Hercules, excited and violent and represented struggling with strained muscles at their superhuman tasks.

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